

Ohio Stories
by
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Department of English
Creative Thesis

Multiple media: Comic book, script, blog



SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (4)

So here's what I've been doing this week:

A little storyboarding

A little research

A little reading

A little learning

A lot of thinking

The storyboarding has been going much, much slower than expected. I could pin it on any number of factors. My slow rate of progress has led me to question whether I should press on, or switch to an alternate mode of production, where I storyboard ~15 pages at a time, then draft those pages. I'm strongly favoring that right now.

My research has been into shipping mechanics and terminology. I don't have anything wildly surprising to report, other than that (1) delivery people enjoy their jobs because of the people with whom they work, and (2) professional delivery people call packages "freight".

My reading has been in one of my all-time favorite comics, *The Nail*. There are many, many things done well in that book, but the one that's most pertinent to *Ohio Stories* is the pairing of text and image for dramatic effect. In a gross lapse of judgment, I haven't taken notes this time, but I have a fool tools in mind that I intend to lift.

My learning has come in the form of AdobeTV. I first dove in with Illustrator using my intuition alone. The slow rate at which I moved on this technology convinced me that I was doing something wrong and needed help. I skipped the first one or two tutorials, which were on very pedestrian subjects, and have been dutifully learning all about the panels and tools available to me.

My thinking is probably worthy of another post, but I'll say this: it's a very good thing that I haven't scripted out *Ohio Stories* already.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:10 AM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [META](#)

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ABOUT ME

EVEN THEMES

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[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009

Snarky, cream lie: Sincere malarky (3)

So I decided to start doing some research for a change.

The event that inspired the external conflict of Dayton Stories has always been the DHL closing in Wilmington, just outside of Dayton. Naturally, the DRES closing was always miniscule compared to that, so I never touched on the economics of the whole deal. Also, the only character impacted by this in the story is a kid with (relatively) plenty of options, good health, and no dependents. In short, I'm starting to realize how fictitious this story really is.

I can't really deal with the DHL closing, because that's like an open wound for me. As you might guess by the nature of my project, I have a lot of my identity tied up in the loveable little craphole that is Dayton. To see the sort of suffering that the DHL closing caused... really hurts me. It also drives home how pathetic my Fulbright fretting is with any degree of perspective. My troubles are a joke compared to people who are stockpiling soup and pulling kids out of college.

The bittersweet part about all of this is that it is forcing me to engage with the truth. The truth is that my story, as Erica pointed out weeks ago, is just another college-aged kid picaresque. Everybody in this plot is a young, attractive, healthy, ambitious ghost, who walks through walls and feels no pain. I tried before to talk about pain in Dayton Stories, but I had to stop: is there any point in a fiction-maker creating anguish? The truth is that a narrator is supposed to grant a perspective onto the world that the reader isn't aware of. I haven't done that so far, because I don't have real characters. I need to fix this.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:56 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

Snarky, cream lie: Sincere malarky

So I found out today that I was rejected from another major opportunity that I was considering after graduation. It's not the end of the world, and I'm trying to make the best of the situation.

First, I'm going to try to work some of my current sadness into Spektor's dialog. This does mean that I'll be taking time off of storyboarding, but I don't have to explain the principle of comparative advantage, do I?

Second, I'm going to try to use this new knowledge to reevaluate what I'm doing with this project. I know that it seems like I do this every week (reevaluate the role of the artist), but it's what makes me go.

Third, on an unrelated note, I'm starting to think that I'm going to use computerized drafting. I specified that I would on my applications both for this grant and for my honors thesis. The baffling situation is that I'm putting in hours equivalent to earning this technology, and yet I'm not even using it. How absurd! The technical constraints that I was initially worried about may be remedied with a few tutorials. It now seems absurd to me that I tried to decide how much I would use this technology without ever learning to use it. There's certainly going to be a fixed start-up cost--a few hours drained from my schedule to master this device--but artist friends tell me that my productivity will skyrocket as soon as I learn to use it correctly.

That's all, little blog. I'm going to write some mopey dialog for Spektor now. I hope.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:36 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [SPEKTOR](#), [STORYBOARDING](#), [WRITING](#)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2009

Is Not Drab Orgy: Storyboarding (3)

So my storyboarding is going a little better today. As I had hoped, I've started to hit a groove on a cartoony sketching style. Also, I think it helped that I spent an early part of my time at work writing about my goals. I've done two pages so far today, which isn't great, but it's not terrible.

I have a tendency to stall at the beginnings of pages, so I may want to start staggering panel plots so I can always swing my momentum around. I imagine that I'll set down the first half of one page, get an intuition for the way that one will end, set down the first half of the next page, go back and finish the first, get an intuition for the way the second will end, and go forward and start a third. We'll see. It's an idea.

Still, I probably won't have all of this done by the end of the week.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:51 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [STORYBOARDING](#)

Losing Lucidity: Slug in Docility

So I wrote last time that I need to feel some motivation to plow through these layouts. In the past, it's been a thought experiment that drove me to strike through mask of traditional comics production. Unfortunately, those thought experiments were never tied to a coherent or well-designed plot. This time around, I've got a coherent plot but none of the sizzle of a passionate pursuit. I need to find something compelling or strange in this plot to drive me through the production of this comic.

I believe that comics have a special ability to absorb absurdity because the disjoint nature of comics privileges a very special mode of consciousness. It's my metaphysics that absurd and surreal events are regular in our stimuli, but are easily narrated out in the process of consciousness. Some forms of art perfect patterns, the patterns of observation that sublimate the surreal. Some forms of art and nearly all forms of psychedelia fixate on the fantastic factual, which are those little bits of surreality and absurdity that can't line up. This binary is useful for me in understanding the way that some arts are different.

Comics, as I said before, are a disjoint art. Like other textual arts, comics are an art that the reader narrates. The comics maker doesn't narrate. The comics maker gives the reader an artifact to bounce against his or her head. I think that the comics maker can play a game with the way that consciousness narrates. I think that the comics maker can fill his artifact with absurdities--hopefully to serve a thematic purpose--that will not be rejected as such.

I think that the absurdities of a comics narrative can add depth and width to a simple play-by-play. It's not an original thought to propose

some variety of multi-narrative, but I don't want to make a cat-o-nine tales. I want to tell one story, but I want it to resonate with more than its constituent parts. I hope that by using thematic absurdities, I can engage with thoughts of the reader not otherwise engaged in the story, and thereby expand the storyworld in his or her own mind.

Anyway, all of this is inspired by a video I saw today. I first paid no special attention to it until it touched on a device that I thought would be interesting for Ohio Stories. That device--an absurdity, really--appears around the 2:00 mark. A boy's head is mounted on a clock, and some lines like legs then develop into a traffic pattern. My initial response was to notice the hallmarks of time and space, which are vital subjects to the comics art. I then considered the transition between the static image and the motive. The instrument of the change was the line, which is an absurdly simple and powerful atom of the arts. I then thought about all the psychedelic transitions possible with simple line tricks that are available to comics, and I then thought about the usefulness of the psychedelic in a narrative text. This video is what inspired this post:



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:14 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2009

Is Not Drab Orgy: Storyboarding (2)

Well, this first day didn't work out at all. I didn't put in the hours that I wanted and I wasn't nearly as productive as I wanted to be. If I were generous, I'd say that I spent a grand 3 hours on the project today and produced a measly 4 pages of storyboards. They're not genius. They're not even lettered. And I probably did something more like 2 1/2 hours.

I'll have a bigger chunk of open time tomorrow, but I need to find better motivation or a better work structure to pull this stuff off. We'll see. Maybe I should consult Faulkner again.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:50 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [STORYBOARDING](#)

Is Not Drab Orgy: Storyboarding (1)

I know that I sounded optimistic in my first post, but my spirit has been broken.

There's no way I can turn out 14 storyboards per day. There may be, but I'm trying to make these *well*, and I just started.

So for today, I promise certain failure. I hope this gets better.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 4:11 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [STORYBOARDING](#)

A Question on Procedure: Utopian's Conquered Ogre (2)

So I said before that I want to finish storyboarding by the end of the month. I still think this is possible.

I've got 37 individual scenes right now, averaging ~2 pages per scene. If I storyboard a total of 70 pages (assuming I'll edit down this number for final production), and I have 25 hours of work in which I can do this before the end of the week, then I should turn out 14 pages for every day at work, or about one storyboard every 20 minutes ($3b/h * 5h = 15b$). I've got several fields of action planned out for each of these scenes, so I think this should be doable.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:39 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [STORYBOARDING](#)

On Perfectionism: Reminiscent Poof

I've been trying to acclimate myself to the ethos of comics, which is based around slap-dashery, roughness, and a general celebration of imperfections.

My last major effort was so driven by perfectionism that I had to reduce my drawing style to single, solid lines in order to function. It confused all but trained readers.

I'm very encouraged by this quote (allegedly) by Da Vinci: "Art is never finished, only abandoned". Here's hoping.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:52 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (3)

By the way, I met my goal of 25 hours in a week for the first time this week.

Yay me!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:26 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#)

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (3)

I'm finished with my third draft of the plot points. There are some sections that I'm unhappy with, but I think that I have plenty of good stuff for now.

I'll be radio silent tomorrow, I think. I have two big exams next week.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:54 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

FRIDAY, JANUARY 23, 2009

The Dire Gawkiness: This Week's Reading

Here are my notes on Paul Pope. They're about at the intellectual caliber of a gawking fanboy.

Front page: What's immediately obvious is that Paul Pope only drew out his T-square a few times to compose this page. The silhouettes of the buildings match perspective, but the internal lines are a lot less platonic. The bricks, the windows, the flourishes on the buldings are all the product of a brush, not a protractor. Hell, I can even see that one set of windows is just dabs of ink!

I get the feeling that I'm going to feel stupid very often while reading this book; there are many visible tricks that make perfect sense on sight, but never would have ocured to me. For example, brick patterns on buildings have always troubled me: I feel lazy with Shuster-esque minimal buildings, but I also feel overworked by Perez-like diagrams of masonry. Also, how should I draw the masonry? Just certain corners? &c. What I see in Paul Pope's inks is this: every detail line serves the overall composition. All of the brick details take dimensions and shading tones to serve the focus of the page. In the case of the front page, most detail lines in the foreground serve as guiding lines towards the focal point, and the perpendicular lines participate in concentric circles around the focus. Seems obvious, right? But that's the sort of thing you have to learn in art classes. Likewise, the page is much lighter near the focus and much more inked-up towards the periphery. The lines along the periphery are more chaotic or entropic, which force the eye away from them and back into the orderly focus.

I said yesterday that comics artists have few tools to control the reader's eye. I may be wrong. Pope's balance of entropic and subservient detail lines already demonstrates a technique of which I was not aware.

5: This page has pretty oblique fields. That is to say that the reader is looking at the sides of things instead of their fronts or backs. In this page, that means that Pope doesn't have the ability to play with stuff between fields, like he did on the front page. Counterintuitively, this page is in universal focus, so the brush widths are the same throughout all fields.

6-7: Pope uses shading strokes to underscore shapes or patterns not visible in surface drawings. Also, he positions the action in the frame next to, not along or at the end of, guiding lines and between white spaces.

9: Again, Pope uses shading as guiding lines. He also leaves plenty of white space in action shots. Also, I should remember to use the characters' perspectives, as well as their silhouetted heads as framing devices.

10: Remember that you don't have to show the characters' faces all that often, esp. not in action scenes. It's more interesting to watch things at the macro scale. Also: white space. Use it.

18: Ink makes for some wonderfully elastic faces. Hurr durr where did cartooning come from I wonder?

Also, I should keep an eye out to see if I can abruptly juxtapose dialog and action at any point. It's a very powerful transition.

20: NEVER invade white space with dialog balloons. Those things can be shoved off on the framing images. White space is really important.

Remember to use entropy for shading, order for light.

23: GREAT cut device! Use a spark jumping along a set of wires to spice up the visuals of long-distance communication.

26: Use background discussion to underscore a character's internal state, then use ink to make their face melt.

28: In dark spaces, when there's too much entropic stuff to use guiding lines, use white concentric circles to focus the eye.

34: Collapse the time between cause and effect.

38: Remember to illustrate all the soft stuff underneath people's chins.

40: Draw from artifacts from the last scene to rotate into the next.

51: Just as Pope contrasts the unmasking of Batman with the silhouetting of the city, remember to always establish visual CONTRASTS. While one thing brightens, another darkens. While one thing unfolds, another closes. Remember to only VALENCE your art, never shift it.

53: Use curly swirly shading on clean metal.

56-57: Pope nearly uses a neat effect here. Try to match the shapes on one page on the opposite facing.

72: Don't mix hair illustration styles on the same face.

73: Illustrate women's eyes as heavily hooded.

Also, shiny materials get thick-brush shading; non-shiny materials, thin.

74: When changing scenes, reverse perspective OR keep a near-identical shot for a different action.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:00 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [POPE](#)

The Dire Gawkiness: This Week's Reading

I'm going to try to make it a tradition to spend a couple hours each week reading and taking notes on graphic novels that I especially like. Last week, I read *From Hell* and *Big Numbers* on an Alan Moore kick. This week, as I try to resolve my dilemma between physical or digital drafting, I'll read *Batman Year 100* by Paul Pope.

Not only is Paul Pope a super friendly dude who totally signed my book and took a copy of my artwork, but he's also the inheritor of the Will-Eisner-to-Frank-Miller lineage of ink-based noir. The Escherian geometries of Eisner's lede pages, or the artboard intricacies of Miller's layouts only work because they shine, smudge, splatter, and sweep like ink can. I think that Paul Pope, who confesses to swiping Milt Caniff's old brushes, is the latest greatest ink-slinger.

I don't mention this idly--ink is a messy, terrible medium for perfectionists. Comics, too, are a terrible medium for perfectionists. I have to work some perfectionism out of my system if I ever want to produce comics at a commercially viable pace. And oh ho ho, my plans for a page-per-day will be impossible for a perfectionist.

So I want to read *Batman Year 100* to learn how to cheat. Paul Pope already mentioned some of the composition cheats that he learned while working in Japan (make one reaction per page really good, plow through the rest), but I want to learn more. So I'll report back this afternoon with my findings.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:02 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [POPE](#)

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (3)

There is a near-complete set of plot points [here](#) (choose "free download"). I can't stay up any longer.

When I make these plot points, my goal is to reduce the story to semi-large chunks that are easy to move and revise. A very large chunk type would be five act summaries, and a semi-small chunk type would be like that summary I posted earlier. Act summaries are nearly impossible to revise meaningfully, and semi-small summaries are too difficult to navigate. By taking several points per scene, I hope to optimize my ability to easily edit.

One more note on the nature of these plot points: they will look weird when you first see them. I call the style of notation "deep" plot points, because comics are a "deep" medium (more on that later). Basically, readers of comics can zig their eyes all around the page, even when you don't want them to. Compare this with readers of novels: a novel is meaningless if the reader moves around in a sentence outside of the author's desired sequence, likewise for paragraphs and pages. So those who make comics are like hosts to nosy guests: they must prepare the spare bathroom as well as the front hallway, for fear that someone will stray out of the dining room and discover the entropy that is the linen closet. Comics artists have few tricks to keep a reader moving in a specified order between words and images. Instead, comics artists and writers have to cast several elements in tandem, and cast them into the opacity of the reader's mind.

What you'll see in my file is a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet represents the story sequence. Everything left-to-right happens at roughly the same time. The sequence of narrative runs from top-to-bottom. (There is also a thin strip of numbers that represent the order in which things happen in the calendar, not as they're narrated.)

The left-to-right columns are separated by content. Columns that begin with a "D" have boxes that tell something about dialog, or the *words* more generally. Columns that begin with a "V" have boxes that tell something about visuals, or the *pictures* more generally. Not all of the stuff left-to-right is necessarily related. That's okay. Like I said, comics makers prepare lots of background stuff in case the reader gets bored or distracted. Dialog and visuals are lumped into pairs when they relate. The numbers 1-3 tell the prominence that that pair of D and V will have.

There are lots of ways to read this spreadsheet. My favorite way is to read every row left-to-right to get a "feel" for the scene before moving down to the next row. Another way is to read just D, or just V, or D then V. There's no wrong way to read this, but some ways will be more confusing than others.

One last thing: the colored boxes are those that I definitely want to change.

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (2.6)

I can't work in a big block today. Regardless, when I get back, I should be able to post my plot points at the end of the day.

By publicly committing to this goal, I'm socially obliged to fulfill it!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:43 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (2.7)

By popular demand, here's a clearer summary of the plot (as it stands).

Mike Spektor, the youngest guy at Dayton Return Expediting Services, packs up the last truck of the morning and goes out for coffee & donuts. He encounters a snob asking for something that won't destroy his insides, a snob who is his former high school classmate Jack Stedman. Stedman & Spektor catch up. Stedman is in town for the Wright Bros. Triathlon; he's just finished his BS from MIT; he's just won a Gates grant to study fractal architecture in Tanzania; he broke up with his on-and-off girlfriend based on his career plans. Spektor works at a glorified return-to-sender business; he has no ambition; he has a long-distance relationship; he lives with Stedman's old rival, who has also given up on his ambition.

Spektor returns home to talk to Max Ernst, Spektor's old rival. Max is, as always, playing World of Warcraft. Spektor doesn't mention his encounter with Stedman, but instead talks about groceries. Max, who eats a biologically minimalist diet, frustrates Spektor, who would like more variety and healthier food. Shortly after, Spektor returns with groceries. Max is still playing WoW. Spektor asks Max if he ever thought about leaving Dayton. Max has not, Max makes plenty of money by hustling WoW without the hassle of moving. Max earned his BS at the age of 16 before failing to enter med school, so Spektor asks him to explain Stedman's research. Max does, but Spektor doesn't understand. Spektor returns to work the next day, contemplating a transfer to another plant. The business has shut down overnight. The only person at the plant is Spektor's shop steward, Carl, who pities Spektor enough to give him the last undelivered package. Spektor can earn \$1,000 in commission if he can return the package to its sender in five days. The sender's address is vague and poorly written, and it may be returned to any one of several addresses. Spektor accepts the job.

While he's packing to leave town, Spektor receives a call from his girlfriend, Gretchen Taeuber. She has just learned that Spektor's employer is out of business. She is very concerned that Spektor is currently unemployed, but he reassures her that he has a great job, even though won't specify. They arrange to meet in Chillicothe in a few days where he can explain his situation to her. He packs his car and tells Max he's leaving for Athens.

Spektor meets Gretchen in Chillicothe, her home town. He explains his "job", as well as his plan to make money off of it. He tells her about his friend in Athens, Oswald Mullaney, who has become a bounty hunter. Spektor planned to sell the contract for the package to Oswald for \$300, because Oswald would be much more adept at locating the sender. Spektor tells Gretchen about his experience in Athens with

Oswald.

Spektor visited Athens yesterday for OU's Halloween with Oswald. Spektor was very impressed with Oswald's current lifestyle, and the fact that the classic oddball Oswald had found his niche. Spektor explained the return-to-sender job to Oswald without mentioning the possibility of selling the contract. Oswald searched a database to help Spektor eliminate some of the potential return addresses for the package. Before they left to party, Oswald had to take care of some work of his own, and Spektor agreed to tag along. Together, they snuck into Athens' steam tunnel system for speed and stealth. In the tunnels, Oswald pulled a stunt that made Spektor fear for his life. Shaken, Spektor followed Oswald back to the surface, where Oswald ambushed a man in a bar and beat him. Spektor learned that Oswald also takes work from loan sharks to threaten and harass deadbeats. Oswald sees his job as an enforcer of promises. Truly shaken by Oswald's behaviour, Spektor decided not to sell him the contract.

After he has explained this, Gretchen has even less hope for her boyfriend than ever before. She tries to end their relationship, but Spektor appeals to her hope. He knows that the sender is either in Cleveland or Columbus because he just checked Chillicothe. He tells her he will spend the commission on career counselling. He also tells her that he's been thinking of training for a marathon. Gretchen refrains from fully ending their ties and implores Spektor again to pursue a real career.

Spektor returns to Dayton with three days left on the clock and all but two locations eliminated. At home, he finds Max selling all his school supplies and books related to his failed attempt to enroll in med school. He also sees Max's mattress, dragged off of the bed frame into the living room, stuffed with bills. Spektor begs Max not to give up on med school, but Max explains his situation again very dispassionately and refuses to stop. Concerned but helpless and otherwise busy, Spektor abandons Max to meet Carl. Max asks Carl for help finding a long-term job. Carl tells him about some work for the Youngstown mob in Cleveland, but appeals to Spektor's ethics to make the post more attractive.

Spektor meets an old friend in Columbus before checking the return address in that city. Ligia is Stedman's on-and-off-again girlfriend, who attends OSU. Together, they sympathize about the difficulties of a long-term relationship. Ligia argues that distance is less important than emotional commitment, though Spektor is unconvinced. Spektor asks Ligia to explain Stedman's research. Ligia tries, but Spektor doesn't understand. He tells her about his un/employment and blames Ohio. Ligia, the daughter of immigrants, insists that location is much less important than more metaphysical properties. Encouraged by her story, he hugs her goodbye and leaves to check Columbus for the sender. No dice.

Spektor drives up to Cleveland with two-and-a-half days left. He sees a car behind him on the highway that looks like Max's, but he ignores it. He rents a room in a roach motel for a few hours to nap. When he wakes up, he drives to the place where Carl told him he could find some work. He waits with some Spanish speakers outside of a Home Depot in suburban Cleveland for the workhouse shuttle. They are picked up after Spektor explains his business and relation to Carl. As they ride to the work site, a regular laborer explains the business to Spektor. At first glance, it seems very much like his old package

handling job at DRES. Halfway through the trip, the van driver decides that a car has been following him. Spektor sees that this, too, resembles Max's car. The van driver loses the car easily, and the workers report to work on time. Spektor is much less welcome at the warehouse, and the manager threatens Spektor when his cell receives a text message. Spektor goes to work sealing and moving packages that are obviously drugs and weapons. Gretchen calls his cell, and Spektor has to flee the building to avoid physical injury from the manager. He runs for a few blocks before a car starts following him. Spektor is quickly cornered in an alleyway. The driver is Max, who offers Spektor a ride back to Home Depot. In the car, Max delivers a monologue on the opportunity available to Americans, and the prosperity available to Ohioans who choose to apply themselves. As Max drops Spektor off at his car, Max tells him that he will stay in Cleveland a few days to catch up with friends in the Case Western med program.

Spektor, with nothing else to do in the early morning, drives to the final address for the sender of the package. It is an empty warehouse off of Lake Erie. Gretchen calls Spektor again to tell him that their relationship is over. Emotionally spent, Spektor complains about the package and the wasted commission. Gretchen suggests that Oswald lied to him about the ineligible addresses. Spektor hangs up and looks out at Lake Erie.

A month later, snow covers Columbus. Spektor is helping another friend from high school, Alex, move out of an apartment. They discuss Spektor's story of the package, which Spektor says he delivered successfully to Canton for the commission and a bonus. They review the terms of Spektor's sub-lease. Even though the apartment is still furnished with a bed, Spektor asks for help moving a mattress before Alex leaves.

Back in Cleveland, Spektor is looking at Lake Erie. He drags the package onto the platform over the lake and smashes it with a tire iron. In a fit of fury, he throws the remains into Lake Erie and climbs back into his car. He drives directly back to Dayton, where breaks through the window, smashes Max's computer, cuts the internet connection, and loads Max's mattress onto his car.

Back in Columbus, Spektor pulls a few bills from the mattress and walks to the Ohio State Hospital. He meets Max, and they discuss the "theft" from their home. Max has given up WoW and is set to enroll in OSU's MD/PhD program in Winter Quarter. Max reaffirms his monologue from Cleveland. Spektor leaves for lunch with Ligia.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:49 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [WRITING](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (2)

That break may have been a mistake. I seem to have lost focus.

Since I have conflicting--and equally good--advice on how to proceed with drawing, I'm still undecided. That probably means that the question, as I posed it, was no good. Call me a Wittgensteinian.

So here's the plan: I will finish writing my third set of plot points. I will draw thumbnails. In fact, I will first draft thumbnails for every page

by the end of the month. I'll do this by hand, so as not to drive myself insane with perfectionism.

And now--to work!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:45 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#)

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note

I won't be posting tomorrow. In fact, I won't be doing anything related to my thesis tomorrow. I'm looking at hitting all my scheduled times this week, and that means I can afford two days off per week. I'm feeling pretty tapped out, pretty drained. Wednesday is generally busy anyway, so I'm taking the day off to let my background processes run.

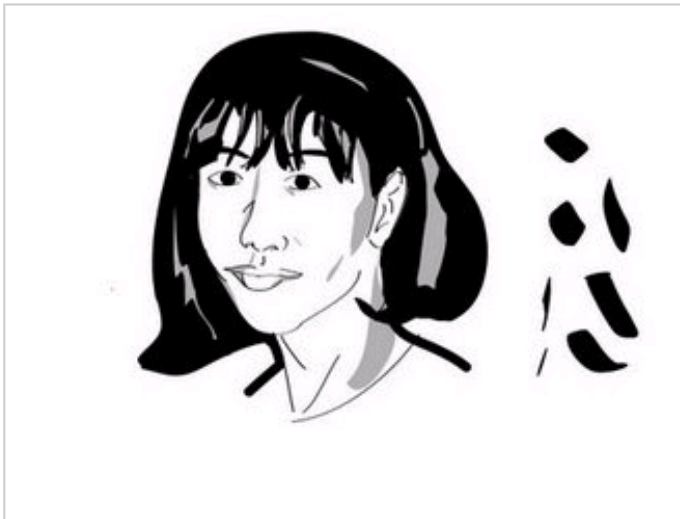
Enjoy the day of radio silence.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 7:48 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (4.2)

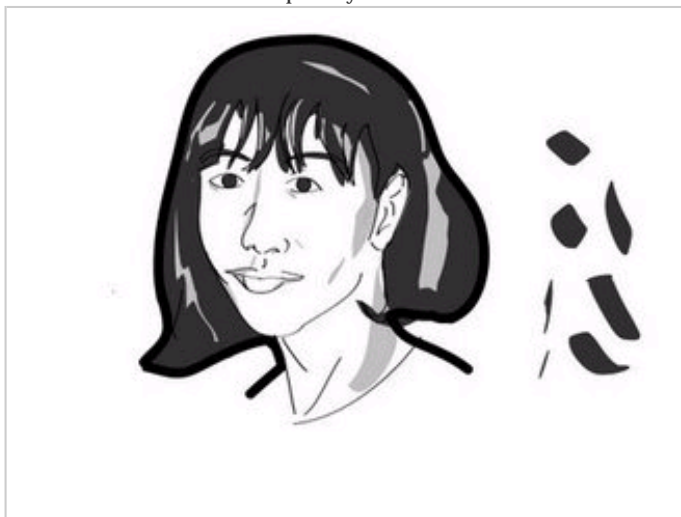
Oh my. Inking is hard in Illustrator. What am I to do?

Also, it'll take some work to decide how to shade cafuzo skin tones. Oh



my.

And another one with opacity tweaks.



Sad Architectures: Character Studies (4.1)

Minor, hopefully unnoticeable, revisions just a minute after.

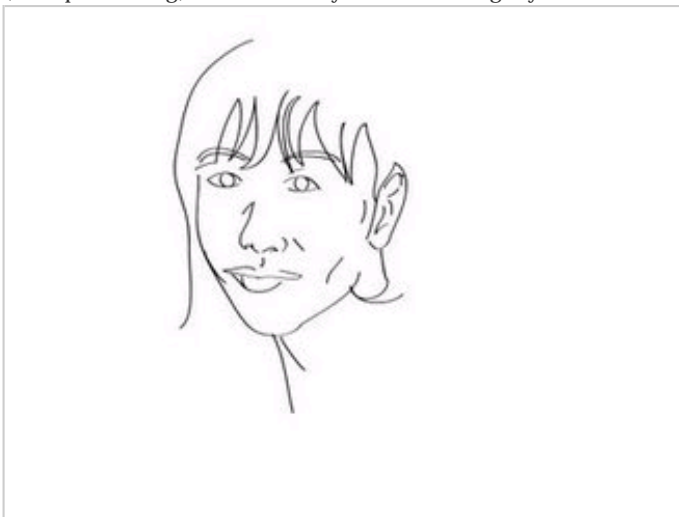


POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:22 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DRAWING, LIGIA

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (4)

Here's the first of my character studies produced on Illustrator. This is of Ligia, who's based on a Brazillian actress I shall no further name, for fear of unfavorable comparisons.

The problem with drawing absurdly beautiful people is... well, there are several. First, beautiful people have none of the interesting folds and wrinkles that make ugly people expressive. Second, beautiful people have none of the defects that make ugly people identifiable. Third, beautiful people approach a sort of Platonic idea of a face, which means that approximations of those faces fall into an [uncanny valley](http://wikipedia.org) (wikipedia.org). So, with my butt thoroughly covered, first draft:



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:11 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DRAWING, LIGIA

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (3.9)

Sorry it's been a few hours since my last post. I'm still alive. I'm trying to learn to sketch on Illustrator.

Here's my first sketch from my first attempt at drawing Ligia. Look upon my works and tremble.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:38 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [LIGIA](#)

MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (2.5)

After reading Faulkner, I decided to pursue a little exercise about the internal conflict of the human heart.

I drafted out some bullet points for this story as a metaphysical conflict. I promise you that this story will not turn into some Mooreian exploration of metaphysical themes. It is necessary, however, to truly invest in the internal states of my characters. These are people who question, conflict, doubt, correct; in short, think. Every action in this plot (but one: the plant closing) is driven by a human mind. Every human mind is an agent, and the movements of this story first exist those fictional minds.

Interior states

- *Stedman sincerely wants to impress Spektor*
- *Spektor sincerely wants to live like Stedman*
- *Stedman convinces Spektor that Max is an interesting person*
- *Gretchen wants the best for Spektor's career and her own*
- *Gretchen believes she & Spektor are honestly headed towards different worlds*
- *Spektor honestly wants to provide for Gretchen*
- *Oswald takes pride in his work*
- *At first, Spektor transfers his admiration of Stedman's focus to Oswald*
- *Spektor doesn't believe in Oswald's ideas of determinism, and Oswald's demonstration makes him heterodox*
- *Spektor transposes Stedman/Oswald's purpose into a set of ethics, based on trust*
- *Gretchen's philosophy of accomplishment emphasizes different things than Spektor's idea of trust*
- *Spektor argues with Gretchen because he wants to prove that he can provide for her, her lack of trust disturbs him*

- Carl's embrace of the criminal community is based on a philosophy similar to Spektor's
- Carl tells Spektor of the necessity of crime
- Spektor is hurt that Max is giving up on med school
- Max feels compassion towards Spektor, causes dissonance in his decision
- Spektor explains to Ligia that Max has a definite path, but has abandoned it
- Ligia explains to Spektor the justice of freedom
- Spektor understands the injustice of trust (see Camus)
- The drug house forces Spektor to doubt determinism
- Max follows Spektor to explain his choice
- Gretchen "cheats" on Spektor out of interior necessity
- Gretchen tells Spektor it's over immediately after infidelity as a step towards her own freedom
- Spektor abandons drug house because he doesn't feel the necessity of accomplishment
- Max ambushes Spektor to assert Max's beliefs
- Spektor accepts Max's monologue as resignation, chooses theft
- Max accepts Spektor's theft as an act of God, chooses med program
- Spektor exploits trust of Columbus friends & Max by lying about funds
- Spektor decides to pursue Ligia as the one positive example of a free person

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 3:38 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [SPEKTOR](#), [WRITING](#)

A Question on Procedure: Utopian's Conquered Ogre

Friends of the blog,

I've a question. I can't decide which production model I should follow. In model (A), I would draw originals directly onto Illustrator. In model (B), I would draw originals on paper, then ink them in Illustrator.

The problem with model (A) is that I move slowly on Illustrator at this point. I also can't figure out how to perform certain MS Paint-ish operations, and therefore can't color things as I'd like. So, in summary, I can't draw quickly and I can't ink well.

The problem with model (B) is that I would be obliged to scan every pencil original, which is tedious in & of itself. Then, I'd probably use the LiveTrace function on Adobe for first-draft inking. LiveTrace is an imperfect algorithm, and would require me to work on details and smooth out the kinks. Then I'd have to ink additional colors, regardless, and would return to my original problems. In sum, I don't like scanning or scan correction and can't ink well.

So what do you think, dear reader? Should I press on in Illustrator, confident that my skills will increase, or should I return to my hand-crafting ways? Model (A) or (B)?

You can answer me via comment or email.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:09 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [META](#)

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (3.6)

On Ligia: I'm starting to sense how misogynist the (Brazilian?) internet is by the dearth non-softcore images there are of Brazilian actresses and female celebrities.

I had a similar problem finding images with Sarah Guthrie. There's such an emphasis--and reinforcement effect--on women appearing beautiful in every published photo that it's very difficult to find source material with harsh lighting or awkward angles. Unfortunately, I learn the most about people's faces in those awkward, ugly photos. Oh well.

Taís Araújo is the current frontrunner for Ligia.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:33 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [LIGIA](#), [META](#)

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (3.5)

A note on my source images:

Michael Spektor will be based on a friend of mine. I have not informed him of his participation in this project.

Max Ernst is based on Harry Lloyd. I mistakenly identified him based on his role as Will Scarlett, and then transposed this name into Will Arnett. Will Arnett is hilarious. He is not Max.

Gretchen Taeuber is based on Sarah Guthrie.

I have not yet found a source for Jack Stedman. I think he'll be somewhat short and dark-haired with glasses.

I have not yet found a source for Ligia de Oliveira. I'm looking for a young female who's passable as a Cafuzo. Stacey Dash is the only one who fits the bill so far, but I'm not entirely comfortable with her.

The shop steward, Carl Kubitschek, will be based on Lewis Black.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:02 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#)

On Resonant Fluke: Notes on Faulkner

I can't help but feel like a coward after reading Faulkner's Nobel acceptance speech. My pursuit of an action-based story--avoiding my typical theoretical yarns--has led me away from what he calls "problems of the heart". In the plotting of my story, I have overemphasized Spektor's robotic pursuit of money and association while ignoring the problems of the heart that drive these. I can write about Spektor's loneliness, which is a loneliness that lives down the hallway and to the right with Max's other demons of shame, wrath, and self-defeat. I can write about Spektor's avarice and his self-aggrandizement and his attempts to control.

But again I fall into my old ways. I can't write about a terrible person who does terrible things to terrible people... because that's just too easy. It's easy because it's a mythology. It's much more challenging to weigh the human heart against a human heart than a pile of gold or a lump of coal. I have to show that Spektor's avarice is a proxy for his desire to provide; self-aggrandizement for achievement; control for compassion; most importantly, loneliness for love. Spektor loves Max and Gretchen and Ligia and his shop steward and most of all Stedman. It's not hatred or jealousy for Stedman that drives him to register for marathons or steal Max's money. Spektor falls because he wants to honor Stedman and be a part of his life. This is the redemption I have to portray.

It's cheap and unworthy to reward a self-punishing character with a new hovel and a new running wheel. I must give him the environment to realize the merit and malice of his old ways, and to change himself. He must steal from Max because he recognizes his own failure in Max. He must steal from Max because he realizes the vulgarity of money. He must steal from Max because he knows that Max has to remember the moral lessons of his youth in order to leave his prolonged adolescence.

Now I just have to show this in pictures.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:40 AM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [MAX](#), [META](#), [SPEKTOR](#), [WRITING](#)

Snarky, cream lie: Sincere malarky

As I start to realize that I'm endeavoring on a really big project, I find myself increasinsgly vulnerable to self-help slogans and motivational posters. I ward these off with the talisman of William Faulkner's Nobel speech.

This is where I turn for inspiration:

I feel that this award was not made to me as a man, but to my work--a life's work in the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will some day stand where I am standing.

Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only one question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat. He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be afraid: and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed--love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, and victories without hope and worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

Until he learns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal because he will endure: that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is

to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:14 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18, 2009

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (2)

I've met my quota for time today, and I spent part of that time working over my plot points again.

This time, I'm writing "deep" plot points: two fields of verbal, two fields of visual, and the option for one more of each.

They oughta' be ready for weblication by tomorrow.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 3:28 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

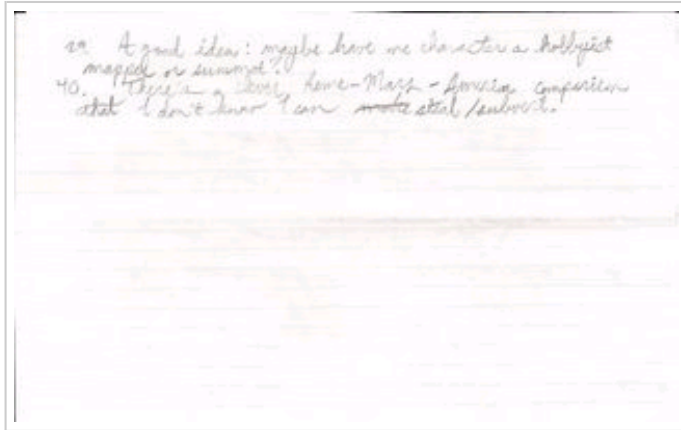
Numbering of mobsters: Notes from Big Numbers

The following are scans from my recent visit to the CRL. I checked out Big Numbers by Alan Moore given what I saw [on wikipedia](#):

Moore described this series as a potential magnum opus.

In the two issues which were published the broad story is about the effect of a new US backed shopping centre development on an English town, based on Moore's home town of Northampton. Moore tells the story from a number of perspectives using a range of disparate characters. Another level of understanding is through fractal geometry, chaos theory and the mathematical ideas of Benoît Mandelbrot. The series intended to show that patterns existing at the large scale (the effect of the town) would have existed at a micro scale (the effect on individual characters lives).

Here's what I gleaned from that: Alan Moore, hometown, location, fractals. Every one of those subjects (except for Alan Moore) is something that I want to cover in Ohio Stories. In the first two pages of my notes, I took a deep study of the first page in the style of Alan Moore's scripting. In the second two pages, I walked through the two issues and took notes on the visual narration and theme.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:29 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: NOTES

O my God! Barmiest Artisan!: Dayton Stories Ambigram

I've been trying to learn my way around Illustrator by making this ambigram. Have two versions!



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:04 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DAYTON STORIES, DRAWING, FONT, ILLUSTRATOR

So Brutal Tutorial: About Illustrator (1)

A quick note about Adobe Illustrator: I fear that this is an unholy

instrument of torture, devised to trap perfectionists behind desks for hours on end.

I have no idea how many nodes I've adjusted today.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:54 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#)

Clumsy heed: My schedule (1)

At the end of the calendar day last night, I added up the number of hours I've spent on tasks related to this project in the past week: 17.5. That includes a variety of activities, from setting up my new equipment, to drawing character studies, to reading & reviewing related material, to drafting plot points.

My goal is to work on this project 25 hours each week. Ideally, that breaks down to 5 hours a day, 5 days a week. I arrived at 25 hours by (a) taking the amount of funding I received for my equipment, (b) dividing it by the last per-hour wage that I received on the free market, and (c) dividing that result by the total amount of time available for completing this project. And voilà! 25 hours per week.

Last week I clocked 10 hours. I was doing the math in my head last night, and it seems that every week, I'm adding about ~45% of the previously idle time to my total time.

Week 0 (Idle time): 25

Week 1 (Idle time): 15 ($0.6 \cdot 25$)

Week 2 (Idle time): 7.5 ($0.5 \cdot 15$)

Week 3 (Projected idle time): 3.375 ($0.45 \cdot 7.5$)

Honestly, I'm hoping that I put in my full 25 hours this week, but I'll be really disappointed if I can't maintain my rate of growth from the past two weeks.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:57 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [SCHEDULE](#)

SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2009

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (1)

Enough pickshurs! Let's see some words. The following are my first-draft plot points, as well as some notes on them.

Workers tell joke about wheelbarrow theft
Spektor meets Stedman at Dunkin' Donuts
Spektor complains about Max's food
Spektor asks Max about leaving Dayton
Spektor's boss tells him to deliver package
Spektor calls girlfriend (Gretchen), tries to avoid complaining
Spektor calls old friend to find Oswald's number
Spektor meets old friend to explain Oswald encounter
Spektor meets Oswald in Athens
Spektor and Oswald go through the tunnels in Athens
Oswald beats up deadbeats
Spektor meets Gretchen in Chillicothe for Mexican
Gretchen complains about Spektor
Spektor meets boss in Dayton, hears about job in Youngstown
Spektor stops in Columbus, meets Stedman's ex (Ligia)
Ligia tells him Ohio is worthwhile, immigrant's story
Spektor meets immigrants in Youngstown outside Home Depot
Spektor goes to work in drug house
Spektor gets call from Gretchen
Spektor runs out of drug house, meets Max
Max's monologue
Spektor goes to Cleveland, checks phonebooks
Spektor goes to bay, destroys package
Spektor's monologue
Spektor moving someone out of his apt. in Columbus, WINTER
Spektor tells fake story of delivery
Spektor returns to Dayton, FALL, finds Max's stash
Spektor meets Max outside of hospital
Spektor calls Ligia

Notes on first draft plot points:

1. This is described mainly as emotional turning points. This means that there's very little visual dynamism involved. See (2).
2. In the next draft, I should describe

foreground/background narratives for every scene. This will (hopefully) protect me from boring dialogue scenes (the classic "discussion on a couch" mistake).

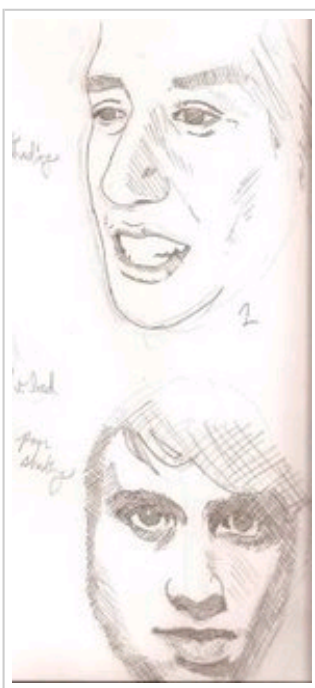
3. As Erica observed, the themes discussed here are basic "college kid plot" themes. This means I *must* inject some new thematics. See (4).
4. Potential new thematics: topology, geography, culture vs. creativity, freedom vs. predestination. The preceding are ranked according to narrative appeal.
5. As Erica observed, Max's patheticness must *shown* rather than *told*. Therefore, Max's cash reserves and potential must be foreshadowed in 2nd Dayton series. See (6).
6. Potential highlight for Max's decline: Spektor catches Max stuffing trash bags of cash in the same closet as his academic awards; later, after Spektor robs him, visually refer to closet containing same academic awards, no cash--highlights Max's "only option left".

Also, I'm sure these plot points do little to nothing for the introductory reader. Bear with me. I'll post (1) a better synopsis soon, as well as (2) a new set of plot points, and (3) a character overview.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:38 PM 0 COMMENTS
 LABELS: PLOT

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (3)

Here's Spektor. I need to work on this guy some more. He's supposed to be the main character and everything. I want him to be vaguely attractive with a horse mouth.

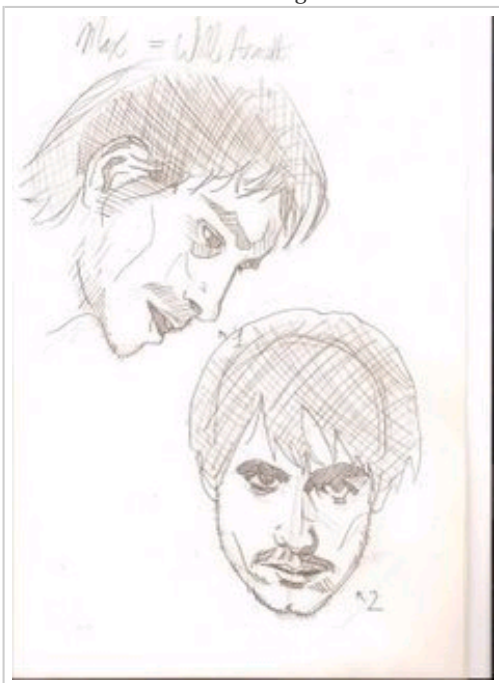


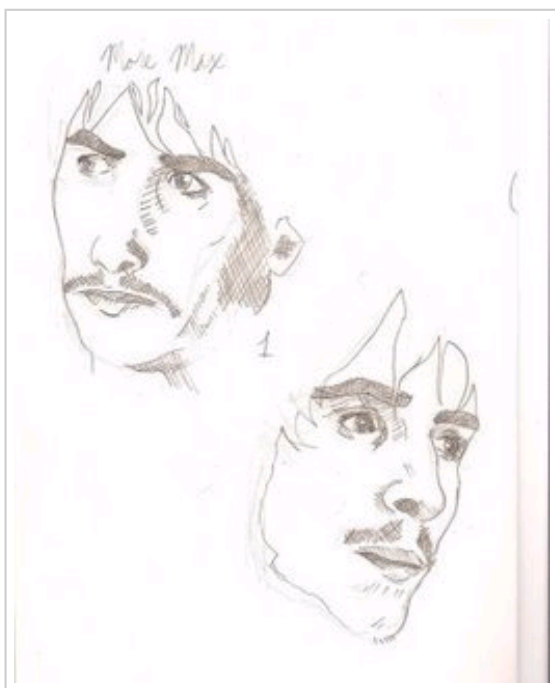
POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:33 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [SPEKTOR](#)

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (2)

Max? You there, buddy? I need to stop looking like a crappy artist.
Help a brother out.

Max is a slob. He's a true gamer who survives on a diet of whole potatoes, pancake flour, and refined white wheat flour. He's also based on Will Scarlett with a grungy trash-stash.





In his own queer way, Max is a bit of a Romantic figure (big "R"). He's trying to live this ascetic life because his own dreams have been crushed.

Oh, and he hustles WoW.

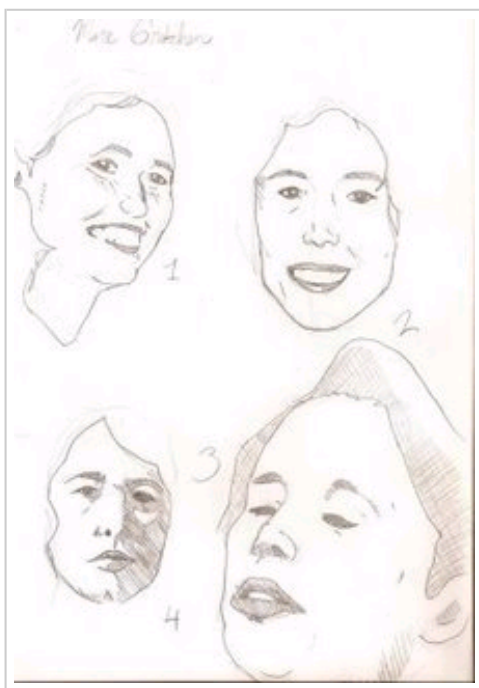
POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:27 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [MAX](#)

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (1)

In this edition, we'll be covering my character studies for Gretchen. Unfortunately, I started off by drawing a female face. It's commonly accepted in the art world that males do not illustrate females well. Uh... see for yourself.



Wait! It gets better. I think.



Lady-people have, like, softness, right? And you're not supposed to show them with bulky, pointy, angular faces. That's offensive. So here's my take on that.

Sorry. Max will look better, I swear.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:20 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [GRETCHEN](#)

Learning to Draw: Now Alert Daring

It's mad hard to learn to draw. I now know what all the self-professed stick figure artists are complaining about.

I won't injure my reputation by showing my first few attempts behind a pencil after my hiatus. Instead, I'll show the record of my practice sessions so you can follow the course of my reëducation (not the Maoist type, but equally cruel).

At first, I was just trying to learn how my pencil moved. In the unposted embarrassments, I was shoving, wiggling, and mashing my pencil. In these studies, I'm trying to use my pencil to reimagine, reduce, and relieve.



As you may guess from my crude scribbles, my main complaint in these attempts was "symmetry, damn it!"

Image 2 is a laughable attempt at Will Scarlett, who I would later use as the model for Max.



In this pair, I'm starting to get more comfortable with shading and when & where it goes. I'm planning on using tri-tone shading in Ohio

Stories (see *David Boring* for an example of this shading used well).

After 5, I felt safe enough to start moving on to character studies

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:59 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PRACTICE](#)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009

It Isn't Toothier, Odious Croon :: Introduction to Ohio Stories

This is where it begins, "where" being a metaphor for an interaction between the signalling devices of your internet machine and an amplified stream of numbers stored as a series of electric waveforms... or is that an amplified series of wave forms stored as numbers?

But that's the point. That's where "where" makes a mockery of "what". That's the point of Ohio Stories.

Mockery used to be a respectable methodology natural philosophy--hell, the people who *invented* natural philosophy loved it. Zeno's paradoxes represented legitimate challenges to the foremost scientific theories of the day. Mockery, as a methodology, was so popular that the perennial bandwagonier, Aristotle, had to draft three crappy ones of his own: one simply demonstrates some poor math; the other two deal with the relationship between the part and the whole and the space of space.

For Aristotle, there was something divine in recursion. He famously proposed that the creator god was *thought thinking thought*. But why thought? Why not recurse any other action? Or better yet, why not an equivalence relation? *Place placing place* is an equally valid font of creation. And that's what I'm studying: place.

Oh, and also--studying the interrelation between place and person. But there's the second paradox again: the part and the whole. Alan Moore has tackled this topic in his stillborn magnum opus, *Big Numbers*, by introducing the idea of fractals, set theory, and recursion into visual narration... naturally, the series died after two issues. This wouldn't be the case if mathematicians had more time to read comics, as fractal geometry is a/the hot topic in contemporary research. The great pioneer of this field, Benoit Mandelbrot, defamed Euclidean geometry and the lineage of Aristotle as misleading origins for the field of geometry. But in the archives, Archimedes was there first! *On Spirals* lays out the path less travelled by in classical and modernist, and only about a gajillion years in advance. "There is no part of the lineage that Mandelbrot does not attack: for there is no reason why any such part should not in any length of time fail to incite Mandelbrot as the whole canon does. In fact it does not of itself incite even such a quantity of the antipathy as it would move if this part were by itself: for no part even exists otherwise than potentially" There's that recurrence thing again...

Spiral geometry lays out the origins of polar coordinates, which describe simply the very real category of rotation operations. And rotation operations open up a whole new series of paradoxes. If coffee were a uniform, atomless liquid, then a spoon could rotate a cup of coffee such that some point is not moved. There's a theoretical eddy inside your mug that is mathematically shielded from your stirring. This analysis of superposition--place placing place--opens up a whole new set of paradoxes. (There's that recurrence thing again...)

I used to make maps for money. I could take a map that I made to any point inside the mapped area, and there would be a superposition capable of describing both my location and the location of the location on the map; that is, some point on my map would vertically line up perfectly with the horizontal space it described. (*This mimics the process of dividing some set of numbers.*) But wait, it gets weirder. I could make my map on an uncooked pizza crust and drag it out into the mapped area. Even when this doughy map is drooping out of my hands, there is still a theoretical point that describes both the point on my map and the point on the earth. That's because the droopy parts still contain the theoretical position of the position of my position, even if they're lower or higher from the ground. I could trade in my pizza map for another paper map and crumple my paper map into a tiny ball. There still exists an overlap point for every point in the mapped area, but there's more. Now, because the map is vertically stacked upon itself (crumpled), the superposition actually describes both a point on the earth, the map, and some more points on the map directly above and below the overlap point. According to the distances between them on the map or in the overlapped area, I could then map out the map points that occupy the superpositions of other points, and hold this map over the crumpled ball sitting in the physical mapped area, and... Well, you know this already. Place placing place, right? (There's that recurrence thing again...)

It's safe to say that "where" has made a mockery of "what" this project is about. So I'll say it in a list:

1. I am writing a story about people and places.
2. If place is a description of stuff, and people are made up of stuff, then place is manifest in people. I want to see how this is manifest culturally, mathematically, and manifestly.
3. I am writing my story with pictures and words.
4. I hope the people that I invent teach me something.
5. Everything that is not on this list.

(There's that recurrence thing again...)

February 2009

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2009

Coo! Ranting!: Cartooning (3)

I've been eating Paul Pope's blog, which is so tragically infrequent in posting that I may finish the archives tonight.

He doesn't post much original discourse, but mainly sticks to quotations from things he's read. Here's one that caught my eye, and seems especially relevant as I will be diving off into the chasm of bichromatism when I get to Cleveland:

The paired words "black and white" express an infinite richness in aesthetic, artistic and symbolic terms.

In illustration, they immediately evoke engraving and the paired concepts dropout/relief, in photography negative/positive, in printing ink/paper, as well as empty and full, shadow and light.

The white surface of the paper is empty until a line or a point brings it to life. Then the emptiness becomes white and light in contrast to the black.

In drawing, the artist eliminates the light the way a sculptor cuts away the unwanted parts of a block of stone. Emptiness and fullness, like black and white, are ambivalent.

The artist is a demiurge whose hand makes reality emerge from abstraction, organizes the space of a piece of paper and gives it meaning. The line becomes a sign, a form of communication.

--Rejane Bargiel, from RENE GRUAU-- *The Art Of Advertising, Le Cherche Midi Editeur, 1999.*

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:58 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#), [POPE](#)

Coo! Ranting!: Cartooning (2)

I decided to cut it short after here:

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2009 (120)

▼ May (11)

[I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas \(4\)](#)

[I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas \(3\)](#)

[Sane Oddity: Dayton Dies](#)

[I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas \(2\)](#)

[Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes \(...\)](#)

[Now Daring: On Drawing \(2\)](#)

[Oh Ho, Poorish Spiel: Ohio Philosophers \(2\)](#)

[Isn't Crying Prize: Yinzer Scripting](#)

[I'm Niftiest Wrongdoer: Side Note from Writing](#)

[Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes \(...\)](#)

[I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas \(1\)](#)

► April (27)

► March (9)

► February (34)

► January (39)

ABOUT ME

EVEN THEMES



This

exercise wasn't entirely futile, even if my doodle convinces you otherwise. I noticed a lot of things about Paul Pope in the course of making these panels, chiefly that
Paul Pope switches brushes, and
Paul Pope's line express mass.

I'm boning up on Paul Pope because I plan to switch to drawing the Cleveland section as soon as I finish with drawing the Dayton passage. Cleveland is going to be inky, glossy, and schizophrenic, much in contrast to the glossed-over greytone of Dayton. If I finish with both of those suites in time, I'll also move on to Kirby-inspired Athens and Mucha-inspired Columbus.

One last note: I'll probably be taking time off early next week to write my economics papers. One is on syphilis and one is on AIDS.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:27 PM 0 COMMENTS
 LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [POPE](#)

Coo! Ranting!: Cartooning (1)

I'm going to take the advice of Ivan Brunetti and follow one of his exercises. I will take a page of my least favorite comics illustration and draw it in the style of my favorite. If I have the time and the energy after that, I will take a page of my favorite illustration, and draw it in the style of my least favorite.

These pages won't exactly be my favorite and least favorite *in the universe*, but instead, I'll draw both pages from *Batman: Black & White*, which is one of the coolest Batman anthologies out there. Page(fav) is drawn by Paul Pope, page(unfav) is drawn by Daniel Torres. No insult to Torres, of course, but in a book of so many luminary artists, his straw is the shortest.

So let's do this thing!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:14 AM 0 COMMENTS
 LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [POPE](#)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2009

To New Reason: Notes on Ware (1)

First off, I think I may be the only well-adjusted comics creator this side of the superhero pages. I find the compulsion by Crumb, Ware, Spiegelman & co., to self-analyze endlessly and in a psychoanalytic tradition to be pretty unappealing. In dealing with this stuff, I have to keep Henry James' dictum in mind and "*Never say you know the last word about any human heart*". Furthermore, I can't be the judge of

method of creative inspiration: I get my giggles by watching sad movies about Dayton. And most importantly, all of these men have been wildly more successful in making comics than I have. I should show a little restraint when "correcting" them.

Despite these restraints, I still think I can say with some confidence that extreme self-analysis can only lead to sophistry. Alan Watts has a great quote on the matter: "trying to define yourself is like trying to bite your own teeth." It follows for me, at least, to give up on understanding the self who creates, because there is no one else to do the understanding. Alan Watts has got many other gems, but the one most relevant to psychoanalysis is: "Running away from fear is fear; fighting pain is pain; trying to be brave is being scared. If the mind is in pain, the mind is pain. The thinker has no other form than his thought." And it should be obvious to the readers of the notebooks of Crumb, Ware, and Spiegelman *that* fixating on sex is sex; obsessing over direction is direction; insecurity from self is self. I see no benefit from torturing myself in the style of the classic artists (maybe until I get some good, angsty trauma). I at least have the good sense to accept Ware's sardonic advice to

"BE

Deliriously pleased with all your 'accomplishments'.
Thankful for the fantastic opportunity you've experienced thus far, and be prepared to lose all of it in one fell swoop.
Happy to appreciate the more delicate solitary experiences of living. Ready to protect yourself at any given time against the possibility of losing whatever pathetic iota of emotional strength you may have mustered.
Forgiving of yourself andn your mind, over which you have only the most rudimentary control.
Gracious and generous to everyone, and should they try to take you for granted or fuck you over, exit quietly with a smile.
Prepared to live out your life in solitude.
Willing to abandon any situation, project, or relationship should the results of your efforts prove fruitless or inadequately recompensed."

Obviously, Ware wrote some of this in the worst possible state of mind. Yet around that point in his notebooks, his art finally takes on its current form. So it can't be all bad, right?

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:11 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#), [WARE](#)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (8)

Dear reader, I've recently checked out the Acme Novelty Date Book from the Columbus Metro library, as well as some other swag. I'm spending a pittance of hours today reviewing them.

Future posts should contain more unreasonable, rabes-like frothing rage against Chris Ware. I don't know why I decide to pick fights with people who are better than me, I just do.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:35 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (5)



Here's page five!

I've been doing more and more stuff of a strange technical and ethical nature. I'll be writing about it soon, hopefully.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:46 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [PAGE](#)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2009

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (5.1)



I like this page in progress because of the sheer dorkiness of these characters. Oh Max, Stedman, and Ligia. Spektor was way cooler than you.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 7:57 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [LIGIA](#), [MAX](#), [STEDMAN](#)

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (5)



I think this is one of the funniest things I've made.

At one point in the story, I refer to the prom photos of Stedman, Ligia, and Max. I'll work on Max's next.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:33 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [LIGIA](#), [STEDMAN](#)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2009

150 to humbling treachery: Celebrating My 150th Hour

Oh my gorsh. Did you know that I've worked 150 hours on this project this quarter, and I only have 4 pages and 12 storyboards to show for it?

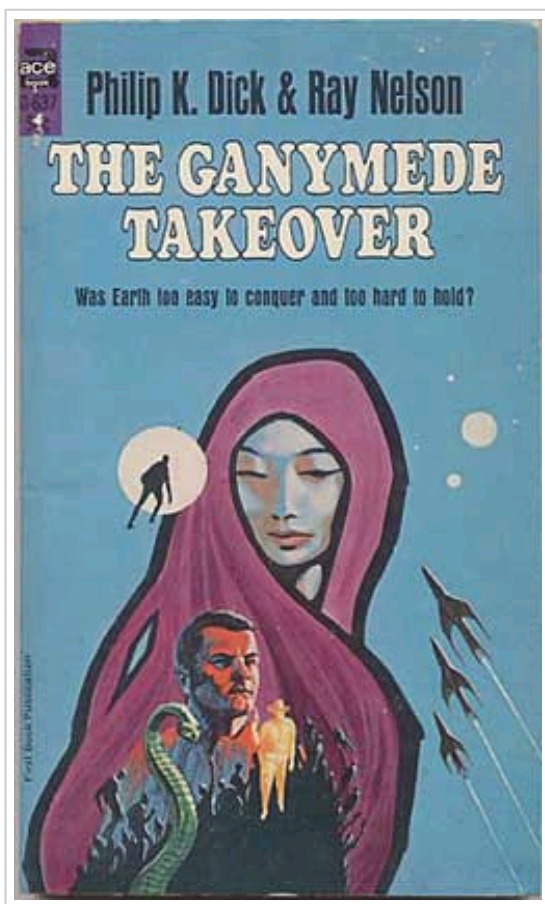
It's easy to get discouraged. Still, I'm 58% of the way to "earning" my equipment (150 out of 257 hours).

I'll be meeting with my brilliant advisor soon. By that point, I should have a few more, easier-to-draw pages under my belt.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:32 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [SCHEDULE](#)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2009

I Love Dick: Livid Coke



...Philip K. Dick, that is.

Will you just look at this cover art? Pulp art was the real winner of the sixties.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:59 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DRAWING, PKD

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (4)

Here's the latest page. This is a unique page because...

- (A) it's the fastest I've made so far, taking about 3 hours;
- (B) it's the first page in which my manifesto on technique comes into effect;
- (C) it's the page with which I'm least unhappy.

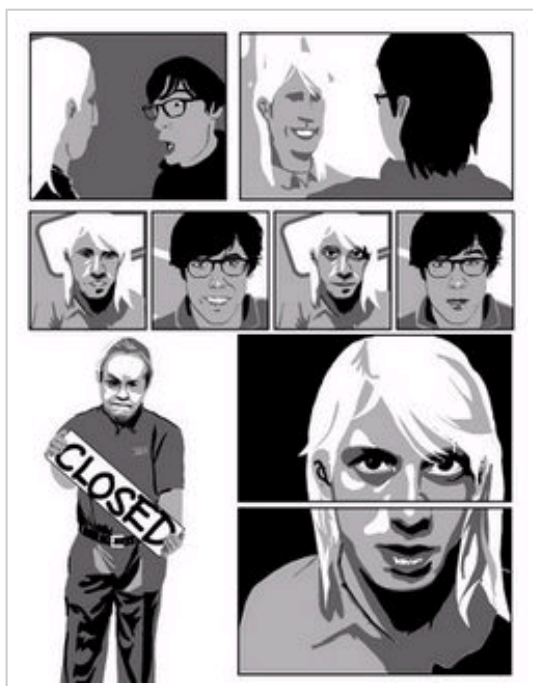
The interaction between items (A) (C) is interesting, because I labored for the longest on page 3 and it's my least favorite page so far. I'm starting to think that there's something gratifying about the cartoonist opinion.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:12 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [PAGE](#)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (3)



I'm sorry that this page took forever. I have no idea why it did, it's not all that great. If I had to guess, I would say that (1) there's a lot of panels here, and (2) every panel has a face in it.

But geeeeeeze I'm glad this is done with.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 3:28 PM 0 COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2009

In Idolatry: Ordinality

I know I'll probably step on a lot of feet with this one, but here's my latest theoretical rant:

I don't believe that comics are characterized by ordinality. That is, if I listed the things that make comics *comics*, I would *not* list "sequence".

Will Eisner first injected the idea of "sequence" into comics discussion with *Comics and Sequential Art*. Hoping to achieve some highbrow esteem for newspaper strips, Eisner coined all* of the early terminology of grown-up comics discussion. As he taxonomized comics, he started to notice that the form has little loyalty to words: comics can work even if they have nothing but images. However, unlike other visual arts, comics only seem to work when the images are stuck together**. He thereby dubbed comics "the sequential art".

The idea of "sequence" has stuck through most of the theoretical refinements since. Scott McCloud complicated Eisner's definition of the art immensely in *Understanding Comics*, but "sequence" is the one original element that survived the cutting room floor. Thierry Groensteen seems much more interested in another term in McCloud's definition: *juxtaposition*. Groensteen develops some ideas called "arthrology" and "spatio-topia" that talk about the meaning of comics--determined by space--independent of sequence.

Comics readers are not Turing machines. We are not strapped to the bottom of a train car and pulled over a track of images according to a set of instructions. Any studies into visual perception immediately recognize that the human eye has a roving focus, and even the act known as "staring" is accompanied by a busied process of unconscious glances. It's foolishly naive to assume that (1) the comics reader's eye is trapped inside a frame (2) until s/he absorbs the contents, (3) at which point s/he moves directly to an adjacent panel or returns to the next row, first column. The impression that there is an intrinsic human order for arranging juxtaposed images produced a book named *Early Writings on Visual Language*, which I consider utter sophistry. I resist the idea that sequence in comics is given.

If I were to offer anything in the place of sequence, it might be *juxtaposition*. Juxtaposed images may be sequential, and the comics maker may imagine a story in which narrative follows a sequence. The distinction here is critical, so I will emulate Cookie Monster: sequence is a *sometimes* juxtaposition. I cite as evidence the commonplace manga "scene-setting" pages, full of emotive significance but empty of sequential direction. Interestingly, McCloud notes this same panel juxtaposition type in *Understanding Comics*, but does not concern himself with the non-sequential nature of them. An appropriate revision on McCloud's definition extracts the clause, "in a deliberate sequence".

Here's the thing about revised definitions of comics: they're almost all crap***. Every Tom, Dick, and Harry in comics theory takes a swing at what comics really "are" (and none of them are ever adopted at large). Pseudo-scientists often do the same thing, constantly debating the nature of Psi instead of actually setting their predictions to work. I don't like pseudo-science, and I have a point in mind for this.

In *Ohio Stories*, I want to do a lot of weird things. Unfortunately, I have to consider my audience, and I'll only do one or two weird things at once. For a long time, I've tried to make comics that have narrative, non-linear juxtapositions. I've imagined, but never executed, a simple exercise for this juxtaposition type. The actions featured in one panel have consequences for two after. The actions in each of those two "cause" two more panels. The tree of narratives grows geometrically from the origin. In the base 1 -> 2 relation, this demonstrates that comics frames can form meaning in more than an A then B then C chain. Imagine instead that comic may describe an A

then B and M then C at the same time as N compound. In *Ohio Stories*, I plan to illustrate such compounds for emotive and thematic purposes.

A note on how I arrived at this position: I actually first developed my animosity towards ordinality by attacking the tenets of Austrian-school economics. One of the axioms in the Austrian praxaeology is that human actors make decisions ordinally, which is hilariously absurd. Psychologists don't need to scan brains to recognize that humans perform compound actions; I can stick my head out the window and watch people walk and talk, and I have proof enough. After I made this opinion a standby in my attacks on Austrianism, I noticed comics scholars employing similar ideas for the act of comics reading. The most entrenched manifestation "ordinality" as a comics concept is this: "comics reading is gap-filling". That's true in many ways, but the immediate visual metaphore--white gutter between two adjacent panels--is wildly misleading. And so you get this blog post!

*almost

**There's a major sticking point re: single-panel cartoons with which I refuse to deal in this space

***Pardon me, I have a minor in French

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:24 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2009

If on so Chronic Hostility: Conflicts in Ohio History

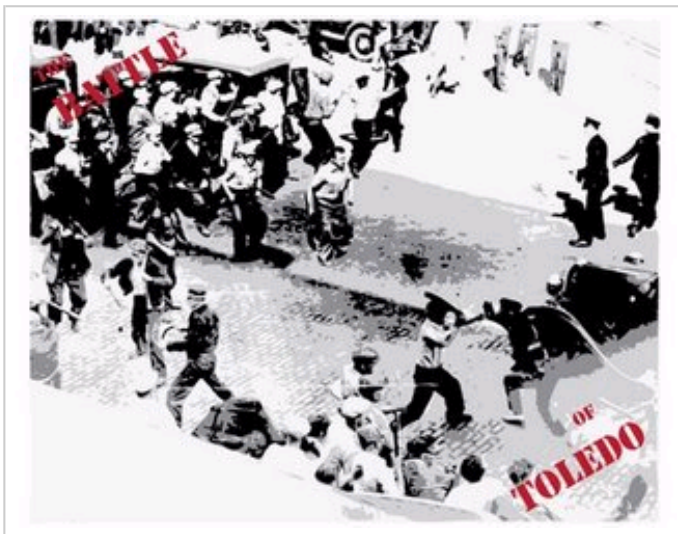
I'm not particularly interested in making this comic a historical project, but Ohio has an astounding history of civil conflict. My personal favorite event is [the Toledo War](#), but other amazing episodes include:

[The Battle of Toledo](#)
(the Auto-Lite Strike)

[The Cleveland May Day Riots of 1919](#)
[The famous Kent State Massacre](#)
[The Hough Riots](#)

And the recent developments:

[The Timothy Thomas Riots](#)
and the [Toledo Neo-Nazi Riots](#)



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:34 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [OHIO HISTORY](#)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2009

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (4.1)



Okay, here are two of the portraits I did today. Fear not, dear reader, these should be making their way into the comic quickly.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:12 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [SPEKTOR](#), [STEDMAN](#)

[To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness \(4\)](#)



Paul Pope says to work on one reaction on each page, and let the rest come as it may. It's an interesting way to produce, and so far, I've been making one portrait on each page, orbited by a bunch of cartoons. Here's today's. (Note: the hair is in progress. I like how it currently looks spooky, though.)

I offer this up as compensation for my slow rollout so far. I swear, I'm working. I'm

not shirking.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:43 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [POPE](#), [SPEKTOR](#)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (2)

Aaargh I never feel good about a page when it's done, but time's up. Full speed ahead. Brace for ramming.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:25 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PAGE](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (7)

Okay, I am a lazy schmo.

1. I didn't put in the number of hours I wanted to last week.

2. I didn't draw the number of pages that I wanted to last week.
3. I didn't update this blog as I had planned last week.
4. I didn't do any theoretical reading last week.

I'm writing this because I think that it's always possible to pull a U-turn. Today, I promise (1) that I will finish my two latest pages, for better or for worse. I also promise (2) that I will not spend an excess of time avoiding work. I also promise (3) that I will update the "technical" post below.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:12 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (1.2) [Techniques]

[Note: I seem to have buried my thesis. For clarity's sake, I'm reposting it here at the top.]

"The neo-Cartoonist system of simplicity mistakes a traditional form for a necessary form. I hold instead that the traditional form responded to environmental demands. The lack of formalism in comics maintains a simple pragmatism in design. I seek to maintain the pragmatic system of design."

In the last post, I introduced my theoretical commitments, which I'll glibly summarize as, "Screw academic precedent, I've got plans." If that were what I said regarding theory, then what I say regarding technique is precisely the opposite. There are pretty much two inputs into my understanding of technique: my inexperience and my attempts to compensate.

I'm untrained. In comics, formal training in the visual arts serves as an intensifier: an artist who might have been merely sketchy becomes vividly raw; an artist who might have been mildly geometric is downright architectural. The vast majority of comics artists have been novices who simply never cared that they were pre-theoric knuckle draggers (although Milt Caniff was definitely wise to the Pop artists ripping off of his cohort). Likewise, I'm another untrained amateur throwing ink on a page. I do unfortunately know enough about the visual arts to know that I'm doing something wrong--more on that later. As a member of the unlearned masses of comics creators, I think that the faux-formalism of the neo-Cartoonists--Ware, Brunetti & co.--is a bit of a lark. The stable, practiced technique instructed in Brunetti's *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice* is precisely that: a stable, practiced formal technique. If there is an advantage to the technical amateurism of comics makers, then it's freedom. Even neo-Cartoonist instruction can induce some Shannon entropy onto the system. This sort of amateurish freedom is well explained by this programming koan of which I'm quite fond:

In the days when Sussman was a novice, Minsky once came to him as he sat hacking at the PDP-6.

"What are you doing?", asked Minsky.

"I am training a randomly wired neural net to play Tic-Tac-Toe", Sussman replied.

"Why is the net wired randomly?", asked Minsky.

"I do not want it to have any preconceptions of how to play", Sussman said.

I suppose all of the above sounds like a celebration of amateurism, and I suppose that it is, in a sense. But what I really like is variation. There are so many dimensions of order trapped in a single comics

frame that variation, similarity, and dissonance are necessarily the driving force of comics. But as my previous posts indicate, I think that variation, similarity, and dissonance are well used when devoted to a purpose or theme.

Here is an example of some arbitrary rehearsals of variation, executed with a quick sketch of Michael Spektor:



I choose between using *this* and *that* image of Spektor on the basis of theme, as I understand it. This is not for naught. I plan on switching up drawing styles throughout Ohio Stories, using a smooth-ish grey voice for Dayton; a sketchy and paranoid voice for Cleveland; a line-driven, superheroesque voice for Athens. There is variation, but it is plot-driven variation.

The neo-Cartoonist system of simplicity mistakes a traditional form for a necessary form. I hold instead that the traditional form responded to environmental demands. The lack of formalism in comics maintains a simple pragmatism in design. I seek to maintain the pragmatic system of design.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:57 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#)

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2009

[Sweeten Gap: Newest Page \(1.1\) \[Theoretics\]](#)

Okay, about that page. The process of making it had theoretic, technical, aesthetic, and procedural elements. I'm going to lay the theoretics on thick before I cover anything else. Technical, aesthetic, and procedural elements will be covered in future posts

For as long as I've been thinking about comics as art, I've thought about comics as a unique artform. I ask, "what do comics do that no other medium can?" My findings are summarized well by this quote by Alan Moore:

"If you approach comics as a poor relation to film, you are left with a movie that does not move, has no soundtrack and lacks the benefit of having a recognizable movie star in the lead role."

I find little utility in the cross-disciplinary approach that views comics as: a slow movie; a book with pictures; a cycle of photos or paintings; a landscape of television sets; a series of cuts from an animated cartoon--I'm not interested in movies, picture books, photos, paintings, television, or cartoons. What I've basically found is this: comics are uniquely dissonant narration. The nature of this dissonance is provided by the contents of the frames; the consequences of this dissonance are organized by the arthrology of the frames; the derivative of this dissonance is narrative.

In the past, I've tried to make comics that were purely theoretical experiments. It didn't take too long to realize that people don't read theoretical comics. People read narratives, and if those narratives happen to emerge from comics then that's ancillary, then the narratives can assume some unique dissonance. I'm trying to write a narrative for people, about people. But my goal (the utility by which I "sold" my honors thesis) is still to develop theory. While comics are read for their characters and compulsions, they are re-read because of their craft. Narrative gives a comic relevance, theory gives a comic consequence.

Most of my theoretical impetus comes from this: I want a comic that loses lucidity. I think that there's something very dreamy and psychedelic that happens in a person's head when sorting two frames into a unified narrative. I want to make a comic that underscores this strange cognition.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:22 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page

Oh my gosh. This was tiring.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:13 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PAGE](#)

Oh my gosh. This first page has been much more trying than I had expected it to be. After I finish these last four panels and sleep for a while, I'll fill you in on the struggle and show you the page.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:05 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2009

Sad Architectures: Character Studies (5)

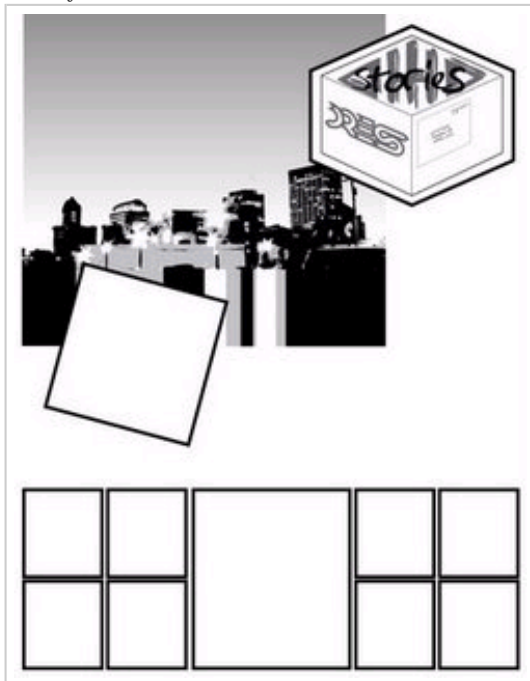
It's not quite a character study in the classic sense, but in the course of making the first page, I made my first image of the DRES building. This is the exterior in the early morning. I still need to add the sign.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:47 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DAYTON STORIES](#), [DRAWING](#)

Fat Grind: Drafting (1)

Oh my. Here's what I have to fill in.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:34 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (6)

For good or for bad, I'm going to begin drafting tomorrow. The big picture of my method is this: I will storyboard six to ten pages, then draft them, then repeat. This week is the point of last departure*, so I have to get cracking. In the small frame, I've got my first set of storyboards, and I'm anxious to see how stuff looks in actual fact.

I won't lie, I'm nervous. I've gotten much better on Illustrator in the past week, but I'm still worried about how my perfectionism will slow me down. I spent several hours today perfecting the interior angles of the DRES logo by hundredths of an inch, and I'm still not happy with it. All of this is to say that I'm going into dangerous territory.

Also, it's scary to put a plan to the test. I've got a big plot in my head, and I'm very doubtful that I'll be able to convey it all. Anything that has been built up tremendously by expectation is, uh, built up tremendously.

The good news is that (wait a second, I forgot what the good news is...) I've got a thoroughly developed story behind me, I've got a supportive crew of friends and advisors behind me, I've got more free time than ever before in my college career, I've got a hang on good work ethic, I've got a strong set of thematic elements developed, I've got lots of intellectual games I can play to keep myself interested, I've got the best technical resources any artist could ask for, and I've got stable room & board, which is more than many comic makers can ask for.

I'll probably stop by to hype myself up tomorrow morning, as well.

*By my accounting, this is the ~5th week of the quarter. If I have a 60 page plot, and if I cartoon at a constant rate of 1 page per day, then I need to spend 60 total days on this project. If I work 5-day weeks, then that translates into 12 weeks. If I work 6-day weeks, then I shave a fortnight. If there are 6 weeks left in the quarter, counting exams, then I should be able to shove in 30-36 pages, or about half of my story. In the first 4-5 weeks of spring quarter, I should be able to polish off the last 20-30 pages. That should leave me with about a week to print it off, and give my readers 4 or 5 weeks to run through the remainder of the process. Yikes! This really is the point of last departure!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:25 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [META META](#), [WRITING](#)

O dear me! Better Slim: Details to Remember

I'm just making a formal note of some stuff I want to remember to incorporate into the story:

- one of the workers at the Home Depot only speaks in whispers into the ear of another. This one translates for Spektor into very poetic English (poetic in strangeness). In this way, these two reflect on the immigrant's experience as described by Ligia.
- in the car ride either to Columbus or Cleveland, Spektor listens to (1) someone telling a very Alan Watts-esque description of individual action as a holistic experience, (2) someone explaining why miracles can happen in Brazil, but not the US, and (3) a story about Stedman's meteoric rise in Tanzania.
- I want Ligia to inexplicably hit on Spektor, for reasons she can't understand, but due to the cycle of her inert relationship with

Stedman.

- I want Ligia to be really, really articulate.
- I want Stedman to get kidnapped by Datooga rebels, who he then leads in peace talks with the government, of which he is later elected President.
- I want the Youngstown mob folk to have a Yinzer accent.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:12 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [LIGIA](#), [META](#), [WRITING](#)

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (4)

Okay, I think I figured out some stuff.

The following things have bugged me slightly about my story to date:

Gretchen

- Gretchen is a flat character
- Gretchen leaves Spektor for no particular reason

Max

- For no good reason, Max knows that Spektor will get into trouble in Cleveland
- For no good reason, Max knows not to trust Oswald
- Max keeps cash reserves even though that's an inferior savings system
- Max goes back to school after he's robbed, even though he could have supported himself with WoW

Oswald

- Spektor seems to get information out of Oswald for free

Ligia

- Ligia is a flat character and a mere romantic object

I think that covers most things.

I've got an idea that might help wrap up most of these things.

Max introduced Spektor to Gretchen. Before the events of Ohio Stories, Max and Gretchen were in an extracurricular together. After Max got rejected from various med programs, he used his knowledge of pharmacology to hustle prescription drugs. Max sold half-baked diet pills to Gretchen back when she was an insecure young woman. Gretchen used to consider Max a friend, but now that she's more self-secure, she sees him as a predator who might ruin Spektor. Max keeps significant cash reserves because that is drug money which he can't bank. Max collaborated with Oswald in the past, but a burned deal between the two of them convinced Max to drop out of drug dealing and live off of his savings and WoW funds.

Gretchen does not break up with Spektor. Gretchen sincerely tries to help Spektor in his life and shows great commitment to him, despite his obvious shortfallings. Spektor throws this away for the off-chance at a fling with Ligia. Spektor sees Ligia as a way to ascend to Stedman's level. Gretchen is slightly hurt, but mostly alarmed at the prospect of Spektor joining the criminal world like Max had. Gretchen calls Spektor later that night after realizing that Spektor's new job by way of Carl may be involved with the Youngstown mob. Max came to this realization much earlier and decided to trail Spektor to Cleveland. Max also knew that Spektor couldn't deliver the package with the information that Oswald gave him, because Oswald had lied to Max in the past. Max's final plea, in an obtuse way, is his confession for his

previous illicit dealings.

When Spektor follows up with Gretchen in the early morning on lakefront, he learns about her previous history with Max, and consequently Max's history with Oswald. Spektor destroys the package as soon as he knows that he can't deliver it. He also realizes that every "alternative" to his life in Dayton that he's seen in the past week is part of the same interplay of old rivalries. He robs Max as retribution for Max's predatory sales to Gretchen. Max returns to school because Oswald would run him out of the drug business if he re-entered. Spektor also realizes that he can't and doesn't want to return to romantic relations with Gretchen, even though he's very grateful for her attempts to pull him out of his rut. He moves to Columbus to date Ligia as a break from the past, especially the corrosive cycle of Ligia's relationship to Stedman.

I feel much better now.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:43 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [GRETCHEN](#), [LIGIA](#), [MAX](#), [META](#), [SPEKTOR](#), [WRITING](#)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2009

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (3.1)

I'm starting to see why people like Illustrator... I just made some packaging tape for DRES. Because, you know, maybe I'll want to return something with my fictional firm sometime.



UPDATE:

Oh yeah, a friend just reminded that the return-to-sender arrows in the DRES logo also resemble the hidden Fed Ex arrow. I regret that I wasn't thinking of that at the time, but the Fed Ex arrow definitely drives me crazy in a tiny way.



I really do enjoy steganography, but at the present date, it's merely a toy and a diversion.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:55 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#)

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (3)



More silliness!



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:27 PM 0 COMMENTS
 LABELS: DAYTON STORIES, DRAWING, ILLUSTRATOR

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (2)



This is the logo that captured my attention for days. I was hyperfocused on making this geometrically perfect, but that turned out to be impossible due to some glitches in Illustrator. Instead, I ended up doing some sneaky stuff that is probably better, anyway. I think "the sneaky stuff" is the sort of thing I'm supposed to be learning as I work on this project.

Anyway, about the image: this is the logo I dreamed up for Spektor's workplace, Dayton Reverse Expediting Services. DRES is a subsidiary of a larger multinational, but that's not very important for the graphic design. DRES is a private business that takes contracts from larger firms like Fed-Ex & UPS to return perishable or time-affected freight to sender in the case that these firms find it to be undeliverable. This is both the cause of Spektor's exterior struggle and some broad symbolism about his life. I basically wanted to integrate the idea of "return to sender" into this design, while also making a subtle nod to the DHL logo.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:08 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DAYTON STORIES, DRAWING, ILLUSTRATOR, META

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2009

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness (1.1)



I made it better.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:55 PM 0 COMMENTS

To Altruism Slanders: Illustrator Madness



Oh my. I made a psychedelic poster that actually fits the source material, Alan Watts. My only complaint about this is that I used a poor source image. Also, I spent way too much time on this.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:32 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (5.1)

Oh, addendum: in the course of listening to Alan Watts, he's said some really cool stuff using the metaphor of space. I'm trying to think of places where I can work these intellectual goodies into the story, because they really tickle me. For example, there's a quote supposedly by Henry James that I can't verify that goes something to the effect of: "'I' is a word of position, like 'this'."

Cool, eh?

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:09 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (5)

Hey-hey. Both yesterday and today, I've been trying to do two basic projects with my computer.

I've been tooling around with Illustrator for the past two days, trying to design just one darn logo. I can't get some of this node stuff down. For example, I'm trying to perform what should be the very simple operation of cutting a circle at two particular nodes. Illustrator will have none of that. Every time I try a related operation, it throws in two extra nonsense lines for the implicit purpose of enraging me. If I ever succeed, then I can use this logo at various times for Ohio Stories.

I'm also launching off on attempt to make a gritty-style poster. You see, to keep myself sane in my dealings with Illustrators, I've been listening to lots of Alan Watts. I started looking at an old time image of Alan Watts with some great greyscale and some great olde-timey typefaces, and I decided that I had to do something useful with it. I'll be following a tutorial, so hopefull in the process of this, I'll be able to teach myself something about Illustrator.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:54 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [META](#)



TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

Vulgarise Unpleasant Goose: Response to "Visual Language" (1)

This is the first in a series of posts in response to Neil Cohn's Early Writings on Visual Language, which I'm borrowing from a friend.

Cohn begins his collection with a heartening misstep. He first (wisely) washes his hands of the case of "what comics are", and then sticks his palms into a pile of equally problematic propositions.

I'm as sick of this endless debate as anyone else, and I generally agree with Groensteen's characterization that the question is moot; meaningful analysis is the vital center of the young discipline. (Analogy: how often do economists debate what is an economy? Historians history?) I happily concede that some of these theories emerge as a consequence of methods of reading--e.g. Groensteen reads comics as distributed images, theories work to generalize this idea--but I grimace at the prospect of either dogmatic top-down readings or overblown bottom-up conclusions. To distort a phrase, *in omnibus humilitas*

Cohn seeks to resolve all of these issues--by making another categorization. On the basis of single panel cartoons, he disqualifies the sequentialist approach. He seeks to disqualify RC Harvey's "bimodal" perspective on comics by (rightfully) criticizing Harvey's normative judgements and (errantly) lumping image production and text production into a single linguistic act. The problem with this fusion is apparent in experience: pre-linguistic people have little trouble producing images, simply look at the refrigerators of young families. Working outward from this error (an error in response to a moot question), Cohn argues for *deep structures* compatible with both language and image production. He borrows the argument for deep structures from Chomsky, and posits that while comics may be a popular behavior, it is the product of internal visual language. I should note here that I come from a school where Chomsky is a fiend for the Linguistics department (the gentlest faculty will limit their anti-Chomskian diatribes to twenty minutes) and have been so thoroughly converted that I can no longer articulate a full rebuttal to Chomsky. I'll restrict my comments to this: assertions like i-language are only as good as their testable predictions.

I said that Cohn's introductory mistake is heartbreaking because he

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trades a small can of worms for a 7-11 jumbo mug. True, there is something wriggling and unpleasant about defining comics, but it's a small, roughly contained problem. His assertion of a deep structure of visual language raises more unpleasant, (methodologically) squishy questions--because it has something rotten at the core.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:08 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#), [VISUAL LANGUAGE](#)

Notes on Joyce: Enjoy nest, Cool!

I'm reading "A Little Cloud" in *Dubliners*, and there's a dynamic between Little Chandler and Gallaher that I think is very reminiscent of the Spektor-Stedman pairing. I'm finding in Joyce little emotions that I hadn't written into Spektor's character--like a furtive courage; a glimpse of hatred for the hometown; shock and surprise with the real nature of the dream life; mostly, a fascination with opportunity. I think that Stedman could benefit from an earnest, enthusiastic support of Spektor and Spektor's style of life.

Despite the immediate differences between the stories, I think that the chief thing that I need to be careful to include comes at the end of both Ohio Stories and "A Little Cloud". I must remember that Spektor's climactic rage has to come from self-condemnation. That self-anger can come easily from Max's monologue, in which Max ironically extols the virtue of individual responsibility. But to properly foreground this, I also need to be sure that Spektor sees himself, for most of the story, as the victim of superhuman forces. I think that Oswald could do well to foreground this, and that Gretchen could indulge this line of thinking herself--since she's not yet overcome her own demons.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:25 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [JOYCE](#), [SPEKTOR](#), [STEDMAN](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (11)

A couple things are in the works that I think will be quite fun. First, I'm reading *Dubliners* again, which is basically James Joyce kicking my butt at my own authorial project. Second, I'm taking a course on identity and hybridity, which will probably lead to a project on the Toledo War which I'll post here. Third, I'm reading Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*, which is interesting in its ramifications for comics-making. Fourth, I'm also reading *Early Writings on Visual Language* by Neil Cohn, which I hope to knock down a peg on a chapter-by-chapter basis.

During this week, I'm going to be devoting most of my time towards the writing stuff before diving into the drawing again... I expect.

Now on to Dubliners!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:09 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DENNETT](#), [META](#), [VISUAL LANGUAGE](#)

SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 2009

Cool! Ranting!: Cartooning (4)

GK Chesterton's book, *Orthodoxy*, is a brilliant exploration of the modern world as written at its invention.

I've found countless enjoyable phrases in this book, but I can only choose a few to share here. I believe that this quote is especially relevant to the life of the writer:

It is possible to meet the sceptic who believes that everything began in himself. He doubts not the existence of angels or devils, but the existence of men and cows. For him his own friends are a mythology made up by himself. He created his own father and his own mother... That publisher who thought that men would get on if they believed in themselves, those seekers after the Superman who are always looking for him in the looking-glass, those writers who talk about impressing their personalities instead of creating life for the world, all these people have really only an inch between them and this awful emptiness. Then when this kindly world all round the man has been blackened out like a lie; when friends fade into ghosts, and the foundations of the world fail; then when the man, believing in nothing and in no man, is alone in his own nightmare, then the great individualistic motto shall be written over him in avenging irony. The stars will be only dots in the blackness of his own brain; his mother's face will be only a sketch from his own insane pencil on the walls of his cell. But over his cell shall be written, with dreadful truth, "He believes in himself."

And one more, on the poet:

If Shakespeare ever really held horses, it was because he was much the safest man to hold them. Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not go mad; but chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom. I am not, as will be seen, in any sense attacking logic: I only say that this danger does lie in logic, not in imagination. Artistic paternity is as wholesome as physical paternity. Moreover, it is worthy of remark that when a poet really was morbid it was commonly because he had some weak spot of rationality on his brain. Poe, for instance, really was morbid; not because he was poetical, but because he was specially analytical. Even chess was too poetical for him; he disliked chess because it was full of knights and castles, like a poem. He avowedly preferred the black discs of draughts, because they were more like the mere black dots on a diagram. Perhaps the strongest case of all is this: that only one great English poet went mad, Cowper. And he was definitely driven mad by logic, by the ugly and alien logic of predestination. Poetry was not the disease, but the medicine; poetry partly kept him in health. He could sometimes forget the red and thirsty hell to which his hideous necessitarianism dragged him among the wide waters and the white flat lilies of the Ouse. He was damned by John Calvin; he was almost saved by John Gilpin. Everywhere we see that men do not go mad by dreaming. Critics are much madder than poets. Homer is complete and calm enough; it is his critics who tear him into extravagant tatters. Shakespeare is quite himself; it is only some of his critics who have discovered that he was somebody else. And though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators. The general fact is simple. Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite. The result is mental exhaustion, like the physical exhaustion of Mr. Holbein. To accept everything is an exercise, to understand everything a strain. The poet only desires exaltation and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:56 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [QUOTES](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (10)

Okay, I've been slacking like mad this past week. At least when it comes to this comic.

I did write a seventeen page paper on the economics of historical syphilis (not to be confused with the history of syphilis economics, mind you) and I plan to spend the rest of today revising my final

project for another Economics class.

I'll start back at work tomorrow. Until then, I'll put up a quote on the duties of the writer.

Oh! I also wrote a review of the film adaptation of *Watchmen*. You can read it [here](#).

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:32 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [SCHEDULE](#)

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2009

Oh! In a Cutoff: Fun Ohio Fact

According to BusinessWeek, two of the unhappiest cities in the US are in Ohio. [Cleveland](#) is five, buoyed up by its high divorce rate and unemployment, and [Cincinatti](#) is at nine, mostly due to its depression rate. BW factors cloudy days into the equation, as well, which works against both Ohio cities.

The only other state with two cities in the top twenty was Missouri, with St Louis and Kansas City at 2 and 13.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:03 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [NOT OHIO](#), [NOTES](#), [OHIO HISTORY](#)

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (9.1)

Dear readership,

I'm sorry to tell you that I expect I will be taking an unprecedented four days (4!) off this week. I've got two enormous economics papers to write, and five hours a day drawing a comic doesn't play well with other projects.

Oh, and I'm a little bummed that I got rejected by my 2nd, 4th, and 6th preferred grad programs. "Cheer up, Charlie!", [amirite](#)?



SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (9)

Instead of working on my super-important Econ paper, I've been reading Zen koans.

Enlightenment =/= diploma

In a vain attempt to derive some productivity out of this, here's something that relates to art:

When one goes to Obaku temple in Kyoto he sees carved over the gate the words "The First Principle". The letters are unusually large, and those who appreciate calligraphy always admire them as being a masterpiece. They were drawn by Kosen two hundred years ago.

When the master drew them he did so on paper, from which the workmen made the large carving in wood. As Kosen sketched the letters a bold pupil was with him who had made several gallons of ink for the calligraphy and who never failed to criticise his master's work.

"That is not good," he told Kosen after his first effort.

"How is this one?"

"Poor. Worse than before," pronounced the pupil.

Kosen patiently wrote one sheet after another until eighty-four First Principles had accumulated, still without the approval of the pupil.

Then when the young man stepped outside for a few moments, Kosen thought: "Now this is my chance to escape his keen eye," and he wrote hurriedly, with a mind free from distraction: "The First Principle."

"A masterpiece," pronounced the pupil.

Ciao, Pop Slabs!: Pablo Picasso

Really, Chicago? Really? You can't figure this one out?

I mean, I'm from **Dayton** and this sculpture seems pretty cut-and dried. **Dayton**. I think my total education has cost less than a new set of home windows. I'm not exactly refined, and I think that this one is, uh, pretty easy to understand.

Come on, Chicago. You guys are supposed to be the prarie Metropolis.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:33 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: META, NOT OHIO

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THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2009

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (10)

After working through my CeltX-related setback, I was stunned tonight to notice that I finished the Southeast suite. It was done! And it actually contributed to plot and everything!

A quick note, now that I've finished the SE suite, on how my goals have changed. When I first started scripting, I was working off of Syd Field's *Screenplay*. By an arithmetic I can no longer remember, I adapted the average screenplay length into an early goal comic length. That original goal length was about 80 pages for the first draft, 70 for the second. This comic is honestly not 70 pages long.

Three discoveries enabled me, as a tired, backstrained artist, to condense the script: the concise nature of comics, improvements in script, and improvements in character. In the process of drafting and writing the comics script, I've been stunned at the capacity of the comics medium to condense meaning. (Comics creation is like the reverse of poetry: the big becomes small, instead of the small becoming big.) Words and pictures? Multiple media make for exponentially faster storytelling!

Of course, I've had lots of time to think about this story as I've craned over the Cintiq, and I've used that time to cut wide, unnecessary swaths of the story. For example, Mike Spektor was constantly touching base in Dayton in the original plot. This was because the focalization of the early plots were so narrowly focalized on Spektor that all important events had to transpire within his presence. Any experienced storyteller can tell you that it's much more fun to keep your main character ignorant and uninformed. These cuts were also made possible by the efficiencies of comics. At some point in this story, I wanted to reveal Max's mattress full of money. Originally, I had Spektor drive back from Dayton (add a page) so that he could walk in on Max stuffing his mattress (add another page or two). Instead, I collapsed that scene with part of the early Athens pages. As Spektor runs through some ironic niceties with Oswald, the narrative eye drifts back to Dayton and watches Max stuff some old pills into his money mattress. If that's not hybrid narration, I don't know what is.

Finally, it's hard to write underdeveloped characters. When I was early in the plotting process, these characters were manequins, who I needed to prop up in a variety of places and poses. Eventually, though,

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they began to find their own voices. And a panel of powerful dialogue is worth pages of demonstrative illustration. I would say that a sentence is worth a hundred pictures (it's past time we established a stable exchange rate between words and pictures). These stronger, smarter characters began to shortcut my poses and so reduced the page count. It's a very nice feeling to notice this happening.

And now I have to finalize Columbus and Cleveland!

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:11 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2009

In Idolatry: Ordinality (2)

The allure of ordinality often leads very smart people, namely Chris Ware, to form a baffling confusion between comics and animation. A misguided attempt to reign comics into external time comes directly out of an ordinal understanding of comics narration.

One of the great pleasures of the digital age is seeing what happens when people are given free access to huge amounts of resources. I have a friend who takes advantage of facebook's file-hosting capacity to store huge quantities of photos. She's started to use her digital camera to take bursts of photos of events in motion, like dances. By rapidly flipping through her photos of a Renaissance reënactment group, I can make a crude film of a peasant dance. This made me think of the relation between photography and film and, naturally, comics and animation.

As I understand through his sketchbook, Chris Ware was tortured in his early days to find a unique, theoretical "thing". He toyed with ideas of manipulating sound, or by delving vividly into the sexual subconscious. While fragments of these attempts survive in works like *Jimmy Corrigan* or *Rocket Sam*, he settled on a different subject as his theoretical "thing": time. And through studying time Ware came to the conclusion that cartoon strips and animated cartoons are intimately linked. He makes three basic connections: first, both are "cartoons" and simulate similar things. Second, both "cartoons" share a common history from the beginning of the XXth century. Third, film could be interpreted as a standardized way of viewing comics. This last point merits the most unpacking. In one of Ware's experiments with Quimby, he drew a page full of small frames of identical size, filled with an extremely slow (by comics standards) story of Quimby crashing a car. Someone drew a connection that I hadn't, and arranged all of these panels into temporal order by way of [a .gif](#). The unstated statement is that comics are cartoons laid out over space, not time: one could take a comic and stack it temporally to make it into an animation. Of course, this is only true in very unique cases like Ware's experiments. In fact, these experiments say more about the versatility of the cartooning style than the dual nature of comics and animations.

Ever since Zach Snyder's *Watchmen* (or maybe even Ang Lee's *Hulk*), it's been trendy to critique the meta-notion of comic-to-film adaptation. This is a bandwagon upon which I would like to jump. I think that one comics element lost in the translation to film is gutters. There are two really special things about gutters: first, they're empty; second, they come in different shapes and sizes.

There's a lurking notion in lots of comics criticism that gutters could be filled with more panels, and that comics-readers assemble a story by imagining a series of intermediary panels (McCloud touches on this in his famous "Blood in the Gutters" illustration). I won't pretend to know what happens in people's heads, but I think it's safe to say that comics are a pretty disjoint medium.

Beyond leaps from panel-to-panel, comics frequently force readers to jump from scene to scene, even plotline to plotline, with minimal cueing. Comics tell stories through disjoint stops that probably aren't integrated into a continuous, film-like fantasy by the reader. And if they were, wouldn't this lead immediately to a Zeno-like problem of integration? On one hand, the panels themselves be subdivided to appropriately interpolate the motion into the interior film. On the other hand, the reader would be sent reeling contemplating the infinite panels between any two nanoseconds: if executed in full definition (that is, as described by the hypothesis) any two panels would kick off a complete computational crash. From the little I know about cognitive science, I understand that comics illustration is a lot like episodic memory: our experiential of memory is disjoint like comics, and tied together or eventually transformed by semantic memory. Regardless of how neuroscience can further enrich this debate, it's doubtful that comics are cues for an internal film and that gutters are the "play" and "pause" buttons for this mental movie.

Of course, not all comics gutters are equal. It's only in the case of experiments, like Ware's, that every panel *ad infinitum* has an identical size and uniform distribution. Even in the rote, mechanical daily funnies, illustrators vary panel size, framing, and shape for semantic effect. It stands to reason that comics make meaning out of their two-dimensional arrangement. This does not necessarily translate into film: indeed, Ware had to eliminate this meaningful element so his Quimby cartoon could function in the fourth dimension. (I'll cut out the dimension-talk before I make this blog sound like TimeCube.) Not only do panel effects contribute semantically, but panel placement as well. Thierry Groensteen has written extensively on this subject, and Alan Moore has demonstrated extremely powerful two-dimensional semantic interactions in many comics. One of my favorite examples of this sort of panel-placement-as-meaning is in Jason Luttet's *Berlin*. There's a clash between Marxist May Day marchers and Nazis, and at the climax of the violence, five panels surreptitiously form a swastika. This is more than a cutesy effect, though, because the swastika is otherwise absent from the entire narrative: Nazis instead wear red armbands or fly red flags with empty white circles inside of them. In this moment of panel-placement, it's destructive to the entire novel to read this scene ordinally. It's destructive to read this comic as a series of left-to-right transitions. This non-ordinal scene undermines the cartoonist's impulse to stack comics frames in temporal order and run them through a projector.

This is the best argument against ordinality that I can conjure. If a comics reader thinks that comics are strictly sequential, I challenge that reader to take on of Will Eisner's famous *Spirit* pages, then number and divide the sequential elements. In an ordinal understanding of comics, it should make no difference if these story elements are next to each other on the page, or on separate pages. The challengee will realize immediately that he is destroying a meaningful aspect of the comic to construct it merely as ordinal sequence.

Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes (2)

Another note on Cincinnati superheroes: the Nati is missing from *Ohio Stories*. There are personal, political, and plot-based reasons for this decision.

First, I have to admit that I'm pretty dim about Cincinnati for someone who grew up an hour away. I don't know the class and racial implications of most of the neighborhoods, I don't feel confident summarizing Cincinnati history, and know little about the local experience other than what I've picked up on day trips. I probably couldn't find Fountain Square without asking for directions.

Second, Cincinnati is a strange animal relative to other Ohio cities. It, or at least "Losantiville", is as old as the US Constitution. It was the first American boom town because it was uniquely situated along the Ohio to extract resources from the Northwest Territory. This developed into down-river ties, as Midwestern goods--and briefly, guns--flowed through the South along the Mississippi. Cincinnati was the first Ohio city to be linked by rail to the South (see [this old magazine ad](#): the rest of the magazine's a treat, too). Geologically, Cincinnati is technically at the extreme north of the Upland South. And the Nati fails my rule-of-thumb test for Rust Belt status: *nobody makes car parts there*. Cincinnati is sufficiently distant from other parts of the Ohio experience to deserve a chronicle entirely its own: it can't fit in with the rest!

Third, the five-one-three doesn't figure into the plot of Ohio Stories. In the three act structure, Dayton takes the first act, Southeast Ohio takes the second act, and Central-North Ohio takes the third act. I chose SE and C-N Ohio over other quadrants for political reasons: they're closer to Dayton, although Chillicothe occupies the rural part of the Venn Diagram and Cleveland the industrial. Dayton has always been my starting point, because it's commonly taken as a sort of "transparent" Ohio city. It's sufficiently in the boonies not to fall in as the satellite of any of the three C's, and it's large enough to hold its own recognizability (Ohioans understand where Dayton is, but probably not Racine). Cincinnati doesn't figure into the rural-to-industrial spectrum on which Dayton rests--probably due to its history as a center of commerce.

But finally and most importantly, Cincinnati falls out of this story for a simple point of plot: Oswald lies to Spektor about the "C" cities that he must visit. The big "C" city that Spektor overlooks is Cincinnati, which is the package's true destination. So, in *Ohio Stories*, there must be one big "C" that gets ignored, and Cincinnati gets the axe for all the above reasons.

Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes (1)

I couldn't not discuss [this](#) news item. In brief, a 21-year old from Milford has been "fighting" crime in Cincinnati, if "fighting" is taken to

mean counter-assailing criminals and conducting citizen's arrests. It's a familiar concept to comics fans, and a familiar social context to urban Ohioans: a young man recovering from a personal trauma dedicates his life to fighting violent crime in the city. Yet this has no place in *Ohio Stories*.

I'm not making a superhero comic set in Ohio because this story is driven by an interest in space, and only through that the individual experience. The notion of a superhero is counter to this relation: it's about an individual, and through that the city experience. Granted, superheroes are directly a product of the urban experience and journalistic expansion of the early twentieth century. (Sidebar: in the only-recently urbanized Norway, Donald Duck outsells superheroes.) Yet in these stories, superheroes manifest certain peculiarities of the city. Spider-Man embodies the canyon-like nature of Manhattan and the consequences of petty crime; Reed Richards embodies the dislocation of the university types of NYU and Columbia; Superman's powers were originally an illustrated urban fantasy of running along telephone wires, bouncing over Art Deco monoliths, and hoisting automobiles. Again, the problem with this, for my project, is that the environment is replaced in favor of this character. (For a spot of armchair anthropology, compare the individualistic loner-heroes of US comics to the joint-power creations of Japan, such as Voltron, the Power Rangers, Sailor Moon, Pokemon, etc.) If I were feeling especially experimental, I might invert this--replace character with environment--but I'm simply not good enough to make that into a decent story.

Years down the line, when *Shadowhare* has finished dislocating shoulders, I would like to make a comic about this man: just not a superhero comic. If I were to reapply the *Ohio Stories* formulation, it would be about this man's foster homes; Milton; Over the Rhine; the Ohio River. I prefer to peek at characters under the curtains of environments.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 7:02 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [CINCINNATI](#), [WRITING](#)

Proud Tolerance: Procedural Note (9)

My scriptwriting software has just deleted all of the past few days' work, so I'm going to be a little behind finishing the Chillicothe/Athens suite.

I have to rewrite all of that. Guh. I'm just going to keep telling myself that this is my "latest draft".

By the by, this is the third software platform that I've learned solely for this project. For those keeping score at home, I've learned how to use (1) Inkscape, (2) Illustrator, and (3) CeltX. I've also had to learn how to use the broader Adobe suite so I could create brushes, fonts, and colors in Kuler. And that's not to mention this whole Cintiq business...

I doubt that most other honors theses involve this many technical hoops. Or spontaneous deletions.

UPDATE: I've been knocked back to nine pages. Time to put my thinking cap on.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2009

Geek Isn't Poser: Seeing Spektor (1)



A friend asked me today if I was going to fix the sketch lines on Spektor in the latest pages. The answer is that the art as posted is intended for printing. In other words, that's *intentional*. My fiancé has been telling me lately that it's cheating for authors to reveal their intentions, but I feel that I'm allowed to declare them when asked mid-process. Such a declaration is as follows:

Mike Spektor's image is to illustrate several character traits of his. Specifically, I intend to demonstrate Spektor's separation his environment, his self-conceived incompleteness, and his status as a spectre. I also hope to show something particular about this project.

Mike Spektor used to be a Daytonian. That's how he begins this story, but then he "loses" that status after a chat with his high school friend, Jack Stedman. Stedman disrupts some of the ideas that Spektor used as consolation about his career, romance, and hometown, dovetailing with the closing of Spektor's workplace. After this, Spektor becomes a man separate from his environment, and I drew him in such a way to show that.

Along with placelessness, Stedman inspires a conviction of incompleteness in Spektor. In comparison to Jack Stedman, Mike Spektor is unemployed, uneducated, unaccomplished, unworldly (not in the spiritual sense), unrefined, unfit, and uncommitted romantically. Basically, I want Mike Spektor to look as he feels.

Mike Spektor should also look like his name. One of the great inheretances of comics is to make charicatures with Dickensian names, like "Nick Fury" or "Happy Hogan". When I was naming my character, I wanted him to have a German name, and I planned for him to be a sort of drifter between cities. I was drawn to the germanized form of spectre, though I had considered Geist and Potregeist. Spectre is a uniquely visual term for ghosts, emphasizing ghostly experiences that are visual. (I prefer "apparition" because its combined emphases on visibility and brevity, but it is sadly not a name.) As soon as Spektor took on the role of a spectre in the plot, I decided to begin illustrating him comparably.

Finally, this project is about the process of creating a comic. It's only fitting that the main character of this project be in a sense incomplete, sketchy.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:42 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [SPEKTOR](#)

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2009

Oh Ho, Poorish Spiel: Ohio Philosophers (1)

I've long had an interest in WVO Quine, especially for [his *Reductio of Borges*](#) "Library of Babel". This interest tripled when I learned that Quine opined on the issues of translation (apparently the cause celebre of the XXth century) and that he's from Ohio (Akron!). For these two new revelations, I find him fit for the inaugural post on Ohioan philosophy.

Umberto Eco has played off of Quine's theory of the *indeterminacy of language*. The 25-cent version of this concept says that there are many valid translations for statements--the follow-up suggesting that observation should give weight to some interpretations over others. Perhaps as cause, perhaps as consequence this inductive follow-up gets associated with the idea that "meaning" does not exist independent of behavior.

After seeing this again in class today, this scene struck me as a prime example of indeterminate translations:



This set of ideas reminded me of the image-text pairing/problem of comics (*an application no doubt supported by the broad terms of Quine's original text*). There's a bit of a turf war in the back alleys of comics scholarship: hidden behind our theoretical skyscrapers, a faction of critics deride and vandalise those comics that ignore "their" side of the text-image pairing. I'm guilty of this. I've rolled my eyes after reading Lynda Barry or Marjane Satrapi. While readers rush to defend their favorite comics, they formulate scholarly systems in which one device or another takes center stage. Thierry Groensteen's approach, as an example, prizes the page-scale superstructures of comics, and in so

doing ignores the textual aspect of comics entirely. Much like WVO Quine's hypothetical of incompatible languages, image and text cohabitate comics as two contrasted semantic systems. Can sequential image and language "talk" to each other? Is there a "meaning" independent of both? How about one composed of both?

I favor the later hypothesis--although I'm still not sympathetic to RC Harvey's emphasis on verbal-visual "blending". I think that the process of understanding comics as a hybrid medium works something like the following. Comic illustrations can cue things like episodic memory, which are defined off-the-cuff as personal memories of specific sensations. Certain coded symbols in illustrations, especially word balloons or manga iconography, to serve a capacity more like language. These symbolic forms more typically cue semantic memory, here defined roughly as sensation-independent abstract knowledge. Obviously, there are symbolic constructions like "SNIKT" and "WHAMMO" which slip outside of this definition, yet these do not undermine the broader point.

Image and text are not two ships passing in the night; they are both bound for the brain. Psychologists and neurologists have begun research on how these two forms of memory--types very widely accepted to be distinct--merge and interact. It appears that episodic memory can become gradually inscribed into semantic memory, losing some of its specificity but gaining generalizability. But this is not a necessary condition for the interaction of words and images. In the Multiple Drafts model of mind--the most potent theory of consciousness today--the various stimuli in comics cue memories and calculations all around the brain, which are transposed and transferred through many different sites as cognition continues. Before episodic memory hardens into semantic memory, the multiple media of comics cue cross-talk in the central nervous system. The specifics of this interaction are the subject of many neurology studies.

While it's not logically necessary for comics' separate visual and verbal semantic systems to be mutually compatible, they are under observation of the brain. It's fitting that WVO Quine, a noted advocate of induction, anticipated the failure of deductive semantics and recommended, very simply, to watch what people do when they talk. He may not have realized that it's most effective to watch what people do inside their skulls.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:36 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [WRITING](#)

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009

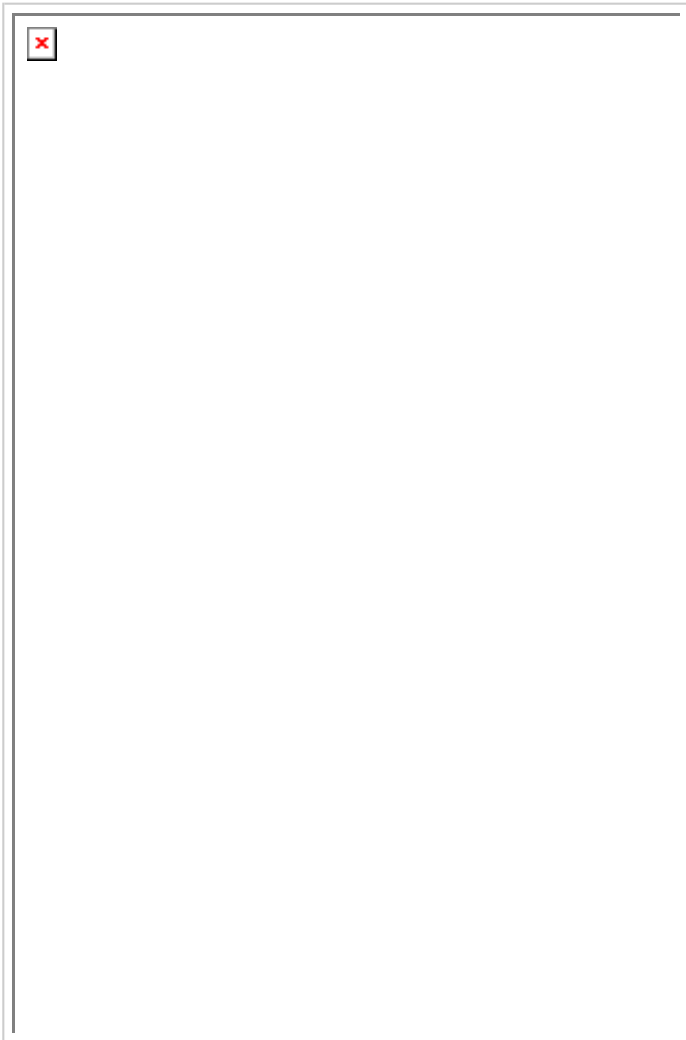
Shh! The Heretic!: Here's the Hitch

It should be pretty visible that the style of page layouts changed as the first few pages of Ohio Stories developed. In all honesty, I was very much influenced by reviewing the illustrations of Bryan Hitch for *The Ultimates*, whose talents can be newly appreciated through his splash pages.

Hitch is celebrated for his "cinematic" layouts, often featuring three to four wide panels per page, bubbly backgrounds, and shadow-heavy character design. He's basically the Aaron Sorkin of comics.



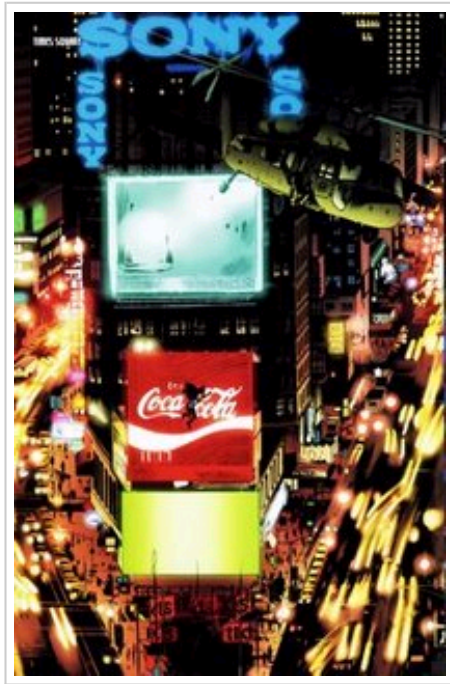
What's often not noted about Hitch is his ability to compose splash pages. Not for naught did *Ultimates* begin each issue with a large, silent illustration, usually to set the scene. Splash pages are often a cliché of nineties comics production, thanks to the taste of the Image Young Turks for violence-heavy vignettes.



Under the influence of the likes of Liefeld (pictured), splash pages became character studies in action poses. Take the figure above: does

this scene advance plot or does it soak up one of the precious 22 pages per-issue? Does this reveal the personality or kinesiology of the characters, or does it ignore the peculiarities of these people?

Ask those same questions of this page by Hitch from the *Ultimates*, Vol. 2 Iss. 2.



There are four standards by which this page is notable: plot advancement, constructed time, composition, and color. Those not well-versed in *The Ultimates*, Vol. 2, may need to be reminded that this page serves as a fulcrum. On the prior page, Steve Rogers reassured Nick Fury that he wouldn't upset a volatile intelligence situation by attacking a suspected leak. On the next page, Thor lounges about a trendy Manhattan night club. In this page, Captain America ties together the two developing storylines of Thor's insanity & an internal leak--at the same time using the same methods as, and alluding to, his attack Hank Pym. Not only does this splash page tie plot together, but it also reveals Steve Roger's persistant role as "the enforcer" of group cohesion. (This character trait is especially interesting in light of America's increasing role as "global policeman" in Vol. 2.) In short, this page earns the space it takes out of the page count.

Even as this page ties together a good deal of narrative, it occupies a weird moment in time. The headlights of Times Square elongate into noodles while all other elements stand perfectly still: Captain America hangs in mid-air; the helicopter blades hang heavy. The juxtaposition of long and short exposures within the same shot illustrates the pregnancy of this page: it makes visible the deliberation of Rogers' assault. Given that the splash page takes up a lot of time-space in the 22 page comics, it's only fitting that a single illustration should contain its own timeline.

The time-jam in this page is made evident, in part, by the composition. I won't belabor the point with more than a few specifics. Cap is backlit by the iconic Coke sign. The helicopter occupies the upper "rule of thirds" focal point. The chopper is relieved by the darkness of the building backdrop. The headlights frame the page, drawing the eye to the dark spaces, and therefore Captain America and his airlift. By suffusing the page with light, the dark patches take on special importance.

Coloring plays hand-in-hand with these light-dark tricks. This element gets last notice because it's not technically the work of Bryan Hitch, but rather his longtime associate Laura Martin. These light tricks carry verisimilitude because the bulbs and screens wash out the coloring of nearby objects--a professional trick executed by Martin. Furthermore, the signs on One Times Square are almost entirely cool colors to draw the eye to the crimson Coke sign, and so to Captain America. Then, the salmon lighting reflected onto the urban canyon serves as a dynamic backdrop for the army-olive helicopter. Every color effect serves the narrative thrust of the story, revealing the true talent of the Hitch/Neary/Martin team.

Splash pages stuff the portfolios of prospective comics illustrators, mainly because they can serve as dressed-up character studies. But until these splash page artists learn the tools of narrative and composition, their drawing samples will look as retro as an M People "Best Hits" album.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:10 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2009

Steel-Born True Itchiness: Recession in the Rust Belt

Two items of significance in the Midwest internet:

(1) [This link](#). (Youtube clip)

The zeitgeist of the internet arm of the US right wing is restless, undefined anxiety. Does this video mention any issues? It obliquely references complaints, and the nature of the "proposal" indicates action by the Federal government. The action I see here is identical to the complaints in the Dayton Daily News about Dayton:

Something should be done. I don't know what, but something, and it should be done now.

(2) [This photo](#). (Large image file, may be slow to load)

This is a street of foreclosed homes in Detroit. Due to my family history, I've always felt that Detroit was intrinsically connected to Dayton, more so than Cleveland or Columbus. In almost all cases, if Detroit hurts, Dayton hurts.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 2:45 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DAYTON STORIES](#), [NOT OHIO](#), [OHIO HISTORY](#)

Openhearted, Dire Sainthood: Another Ohio President Dead (2)

"He writes the worst English that I have ever encountered. It reminds me of a string of wet sponges; it reminds me of tattered washing on the line; it reminds me of stale bean soup, of college yells, of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights. It is so bad that a sort of grandeur creeps into it. It drags itself out of the dark abysm of pish, and crawls insanely up the topmost pinnacle of posh. It is rumble and bumble. It is flap and doodle. It is balder and dash."

- HL Mencken

Oh no, dear reader, HL Mencken wasn't describing me, but another

Ohioan named Warren G. Harding. Long before George W. Bush brought Texas the reputation as the most dictionary-averse state, Warren Harding earned fame for his own class of nonsensical neologisms: what Mencken called "Gamalielese". Harding laid a strong and lasting example of how to be a truly, truly bad President.

Harding's faults include utter incompetence, corruption, hypocrisy, and generally occupying the Oval Office . Perhaps it was by these faults that he poisoned the Presidency for all future Ohioans. Or, instead, his failings were caused by the same forces that diminished Ohio's significance in the nation's psychogeography. The mutual fall of Ohio (as an electoral base of operations) & the Harding White House comes from a failure to adapt to the modern world, both in the rise to power, the campaign (although it seems to be more successful here), and the administration.

Harding was really the last of the Reconstruction presidents. His administration followed the same model of almost all post-Civil War presidencies. He

- (1) emerges as the compromise candidate in the primary horse-trading,
- (2) wins a rigged election,
- (3) appoints party apparatchiks to his cabinet and practices no oversight,
- (4) governs directly from the party platform, and
- (5) maintains a culture of scandal due to (3).

Every post-war administration follows this pattern, with notable breaks at Roosevelt and Wilson. The only interesting part about this is that the Civil war was nearly sixty years before the time of the Harding administration, so the Great War should ostensibly outweigh the War Between the States as "the big issue". And yet, Harding's traditional platform and method beat the life out of his electoral opponents, James Cox & Franklin Roosevelt.

In the contest between the last two Ohio candidates (Harding was Senator, Cox was Governor), one stepped widely into the new politics of an integrated, globalizing world... and got the electoral snout stomped out of him. Harding, on the other hand, could have scarcely run a more nationalistic, jingoistic campaign. Imagine John McCain running with these slogans: "This country will remain American. Its next President will remain in our own country" or "We decided long ago that we objected to foreign government of our people". In every sense, Harding won by embracing the past. But did he? Harding's ability to capitalize on the toxic, post-Wilson political environment came from largely his national ad campaign. He outspent Cox 4-to-1 on media of every type in every state. It's striking that such a disparity should emerge in this election, since both Ohioans were former newspaper publishers.

Despite his journalistic bonafides from building the Marion Star, Harding was utterly unprepared for journalistic inquiries into his administration. He was reportedly shocked at hearing of the Teapot Dome Scandal. His his swaggering partisan loyalty, transparent cronyism, and his indescribable policy statements were all butchered by the press--each one more than the last. Harding wasn't prepared for the modern age. It was this same modern age that relegated Ohio to "mid" anything.

For better or worse, the old rules wouldn't play anymore: the train outpaced river traffic at Cincinnati; Iowa City corn arrived in New

York only days after Marion corn. In the early American project, the purpose of the interior states was to draw the natural wealth of the continent out to the coasts. Ohio long served as a flat intermediary, halfway between the loggers and the mills. Modern transportation devalued this role, even as it gave new industry to Ohio as the halfway point between the coal and the car plants. But a hinterland is never secure--it risks oblivion at each blink of modernity. The Harding administration conveys this message concretely and succinctly: the modern world does not suffer stalwarts.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:04 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [OHIO HISTORY](#)

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2009

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (7.1)



Here's a revised version of page 8, by the way.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:59 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PAGE](#)

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (8)

And with that, ladies and gentlemen, Mike Spektor has left Dayton.

I think it's high time that I shift to writing.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:58 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PAGE](#)

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (7)

Another page! Spektor's almost out of Dayton, folks.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:16 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [PAGE](#)

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2009

A Fair, Sappy, Tough Taboo: A Spot of Autobiography

I've avoided direct autobiography for most of this project, but some recent bad news has made me especially reflective.

I was in a gifted ed class during elementary school. As I reflect now on the other gifted students from Kettering Middle School's eighth grade

class of 2001:

- one has tried and failed to get into MA programs across the country; currently has no employment plans
- one is graduating from a nursing program at a local college, beginning nursing apprenticeships
- one is playing hockey in Minnesota
- one is driving trucks for a cookie company as he works on his engineering degree at a well-respected midwestern college
- one is graduating from a small public university in Ohio with degrees in English and Political Science; currently has no employment plans
- one is out of touch

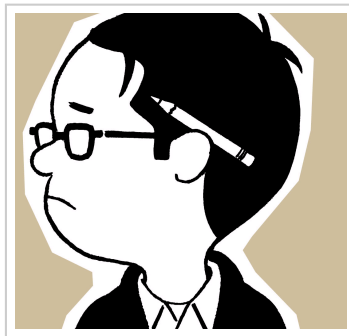
We're the best that KMS could offer, man.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 12:53 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DAYTON STORIES](#), [WRITING](#)

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2009

Now Daring: On Drawing

I have had one goal in the drawing of this project: to resist the black line. You know the black line, it dominates comic art, and can be seen in comics creators from Topffer to Tomine. In Ohio Stories, I've used two types of illustration which anticipate but do not join the black line: four-tone shading and four-tone sketching. In both, I hope I can present an insight into the "make-one-thing-out-of-many-images" (or multimodality) that drives comics, always and everywhere.



I have observed the following things about the black line.

- I. The black line forms outlines.
- II. The black line serves as shading.
- III. The black line is made by pens, pencils, and brushes.
- IV. The black line is two dimensional.

I resisted this for the following reasons.

1. I don't want outlines for conceptual, representational, and philosophical reasons.

I can't use them and don't get them. Conceptually, I always need a new way to "see" for every project. Beginning with the Wallace project, I started treating light and shading as a phenomenon general to environment, not specific to distinct objects; that is, I don't want illustrate scenes at large, rather than images in particular. Representationally, they're problematic--see the perennial problem of illustrating the Black Panther or Batman with black lines. Also, I've never liked the intermashing of one set of outlines over another.

Philosophically, I'm alarmed at the notion of outlines. Is there a universal, homogeneous boundry between all things? That's what the black line suggests: toast and toaster are separated by the same stuff as separates eye and face or thought balloon from reality. This is a weird monist statement, if taken too far.

2. I don't want black lines for shading because of the problem of neutrality.

The black line looks roughly the same when applied to all objects. Real pros like Paul Pope can switch brushes, and brush-artists in general can apply varying degrees of pressure for varying heaviness of stroke. Yet the problem remains that it's all black lines. If I have any interest in challenging conventional metaphores of cartooning, then I must insist that no shadow is composed of lines.

3. I don't use pens.

I wouldn't use a power drill like a screwdriver, and I certainly won't use my Cintiq to merely ape pen actions. Pens are a great technology in many ways--they're cheap, lo-fi, portable, and versatile. The Cintiq has an entirely different set of advantages--such as fills, layers, tracing algorithms, etc.--all of which favor more representationalist imagery. And as anyone may notice after looking up from comic books, no one has a black line around his or her hand.

4. I like depth.

I make a big fuss about ordinality on this blog because I think that comics are a multidimensional medium. I think that there are many processes involved in comics that form cognitive holographs (that's a good term--I need to use that later), and I think that comics readers are especially adept at and primed for other sorts of dimension-compiling. A pen stroke is a two-dimensional phenomenon (assuming no one read it like braille), as is a comics frame. And yet comics readers form four-dimensional narratives out of an array of images and panels. My illustrations are heavily based on shading in the hopes that readers will be better able to integrate the spaces inside the frame--as compensation because I do silly stuff in between the frames. Multimodal shading is transfininitely better at this than the black line.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:23 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [META](#), [META META](#)

Sweeten Gap: Newest Page (6)

Here's the latest two pages. I hope I can produce one more before I get to bed tonight.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:16 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [PAGE](#)

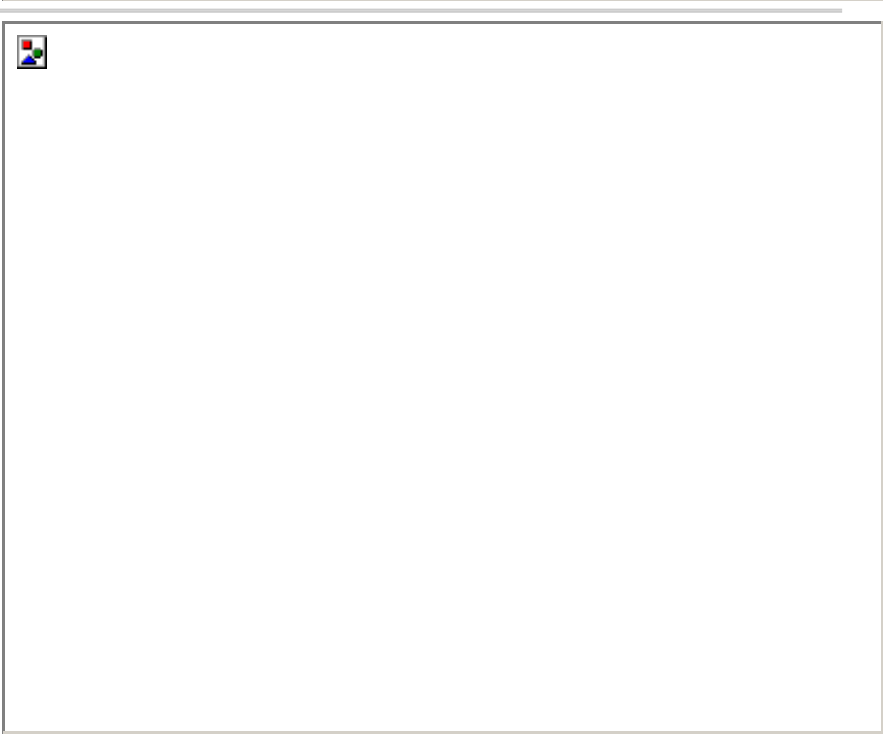
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2009

Mere Farm Voodoo: Mad for Moore Movies

Last week I spent a great deal of time looking up interview footage of Alan Moore. He's clearly mellowed out over time and given up much of his concern over his position in culture. Bad movies probably helped. With time, I might have something more substantive to add.

Here are some of the videos:





POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:11 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: MOORE, WRITING

Vulgarise Unpleasant Goose: Response to "Visual Language" (2)

In my continuing series on Neil Cohn's interesting but problematic collection, *Early Writings on Visual Language*, I've arrived at the item of Photology and Morphology. Admittedly, my biggest qualm with Mr. Cohn is his semiotic/-ological methodology, as revealed by his affinity for hypothetical, visually atomic "geons". So without attacking his works dogmatically, I hope to contrast his views with findings in cognitive sciences.

The problem with most armchair philosophy is that it begins with a sensible systemization and broadens this same method to excess. In this chapter, the sensible beginning is in the typification of photological phenomena. Cohn takes color, which is indeed wholly typifiable and quantifiable, and applies a similar paradigm of assortment and typification to shape. Of course there is no "essential" shape in the terms of *geons* (the brain sees differently from different viewpoints, see [Tarr et al](#)), yet the temptation to establish them is innocent enough.

It's Mr. Cohn's hope, in this chapter, to outline the *photology* of visual language. In doing so, he could locate the interface between visual and symbolic structures. He imagines that images and words both trigger "cognemes", which can be combined across language-image borders. The ultimate goal here is to relate a deep structure of all meaning, with branches into symbolic and linguistic phenomena.

There are three broad problems here. First, the notion of unified meaning and Cartesian theatre. Second, his color-shape dichotomy is ungrounded. Third, his "conceptual edge".

Cohn loves comparing images to language. He thrives on it. Sadly, I think that the metaphors are merely metaphors. From introductory brain scanning, we know two relevant things: linguistic phenomena and visual phenomena do not activate the same parts of the brain, and there is no central core in which "meaning" is made (except,

maybe, in the cases of folks with apperceptive agnosia who have to deduce what a stimulus is based on color and size). I won't go so far as to say that we can't combine knowledge of image & class--associative agnosia is a rarity, after all--but I will insist that there is no "final meaning" into which both images and language flow. I can assert this strongly on the basis of the missing Cartesian Theatre, if nothing else. There is no center of the brain, into which all experience is projected. (For an advanced yet approachable critique of this conception, please see the first few chapters of Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*). Visual and linguistic stimuli do not go into the same pool, they do not follow the same structures, and they spend most of their phenomenal duration bouncing around completely different parts of the brain. I'm sorry, Mr. Cohn, but these phenomena are not congruent.

Mr. Cohn imagines another congruence between color and shape, in a triangle fashioned after Scott McCloud's much-ballyhooed "Big Triangle". This implies that color and shape are continuous in some property, like a spectrum of blue to red. To quickly dismiss this idea, I need only observe that experiences of color and shape are developed from different operations. Simply, color happens in the eye; shape happens in the brain (there are no "shape" chemicals in the same sense that there are "color" chemicals in the eye). To compare shape and color as continuous is as absurd as imagining a continuum from noise to A-sharp minor.

The other faces of Cohn's pyramid are equally problematic. A "conceptual edge" is an easy thing to name but an absurd thing to examine. Cohn conceives of a metaphorical axis defined by the vertices "natural resemblance" and "absolute conceptual simplicity". First, what on earth could these vertices *be*? Cohn provides absolutely no definition or explanation of the second vertex. Second, what are concepts, especially these explicitly *visual* concepts? I sense that this question will lead to a Cartesian answer, positing some experience-of-experience. Third, Cohn's reliance on geons suggests that he believes in a universal set or combinatorial expanse of visual concepts. The fading experimental support for geons should deface this assumption. Any other philosophical objections to universal schema of experience may apply here as well.

Ultimately, there's inadequate reason to believe that concepts are unified experience, no reason to believe in congruous shape-color, and no reason to believe in a single space of visual experience, much less visual-linguistic experience. These objections work against the idea of deep structure, unifying language and visual experience. And so the most tantalizing aspect of Cohn's work is also the least acceptable.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:22 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#), [VISUAL LANGUAGE](#)

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2009

Ciao, Pop Slabs!: Pablo Picasso (2)

[Note: I'm already regretting this post by item #5, but I feel that I should post it if only out of an impulse for transparency.]

I hate to do this, but I'd like to remark on "modern" art. I'm currently reading an online argument about modern art, and the ideas represented there are just too silly to reproduce here. And in a vain attempt to keep my foot out of my mouth, I'm going to rant in bullet

point over essay form:

1. Can we toss aside the term "modern art" for a less loaded and more accurate term, "conceptual art"? While [Bruce McCall](#) is an artist during the modern period, and producing art referencing the modern period, he's never been grouped in with "modern artists".

2. Can we also toss aside the term "conceptual art"? I don't think I've ever seen a piece of art--Raphaelite or Hellenic or Soup-can-ic--that wasn't conceptual.

3. Can we toss aside representationist expectations of art? I mean, really, can we do it? We've had cheap cameras available to the public at large for over 100 years now. Everything this side of *cinéma vérité* is exerting some sort of intentional distortion.

4. Can we toss aside expectations of public support and/or finance? As a gutter-lubbin' comics junky, I'm pretty unsympathetic to image-makers' claim to a protected space in the public sphere. At least people still talk about *Marmaduke*.

5. Can we toss aside the pretension that art is especially abstract? There are plenty of abstract things, and some artists have had the good sense to isolate their absurdity. There have also been other artists who have tried their darndest to put things in galleries that are utterly un-abstracted.

6. Can I please toss aside this universalist impulse? I've obviously been reading *Women in Love*, in which rich white Britons tiny ideas onto a big universe with the sleight-of-hand of an impersonal pronoun. Cut it out, Evan.

7. Is capital-A Art the province of dead white guys? Is this part of some life insurance policy available through the Bank of England?

I'm sorry, everybody. This was all a bunch of nonsense. Let me make up for it with a wonderful graphic from one of Mark Simonson's

wonderful articles:



I Love Dick: Livid Coke (2)

I'm greatly looking forward to the production of the latest comic interpretation of *Do Robots Dream of Electric Sheep?*, firstly because I'm a big PKD fan. Relatedly and second, I love PKD's approach to genre fiction: always as a new lens for the issues of self. It's possible that all good fiction has to reexamine the nature of the self, whether the social self (i.e. *Ex Machina*) or the ethical self (i.e. *Watchmen*), or whatever else people use nowadays for the self. But who needs big, universalist statements like that, especially when wrapped up in value judgments?

Not me, man. Not me. I just want to read some comic books about robots that think they're people.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:25 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [PKD](#)

So Brutal Tutorial: About Illustrator (2)

I just finished a series of *Ex Machina* books, and took special notice of the "From Reference to Finish Pages" section in the back of "Ex Cathedra". In those pages, the penciller-inker-colorist team show off the evolution of many pages from reference photos through pencils to final pages. This reminded me: I have a confession to make. I use layers. And I may not even be sorry. But understand this: it's never been wrong to use subject material, especially in comics.

In case you don't know, "layers" are a feature of most modern photo editing and design technologies. With layers, a designer can stack images and original work without altering the digital original. In most applications for me, layers serve as a digital lightboard. This might be a big deal because I could import images from the web, trace them, and then delete them from under my tracing--all without ever having shown any hand-eye coordination! There are some pretty good webcomics based entirely off of this method of production. Take "[It's Not Abuse, It's Love](#)" for example: I doubt that this artist has ever taken an artist class, or has ever even heard of blind drawing.

Does this mean he's a "bad" artist? Probably not. The camera freed the artist from the representationalist obligation, and much of the importance of hand-eye coordination. It also made reference material much easier and more accessible. Data technologies have centralized and combined a number of processes that we've had for a while: photos, information sharing, lightboards, transparencies, printing, etc. But this doesn't change the fact that all of these methods--tracing, say--have been around since the Brownie camera. Like most of the conversations about information technology, the issue of image editing and production is a century-old question given recent relevance. The ninety-nine year, eleven month-old answer is that the artist works in both image and imagination: image production gives a statement coherence; imagination gives a statement consequence. And while image production fallen to the reaper of algorithmic reduction, imagination is still unbowed in noble importance.

Heat-transfer silkscreens freed Pop artists to reinterpret mass media. Xerox machines liberated a troop of Mail artists. Data technology has allowed and will allow for a legion of Photoshoppers, openly sieging our ideas of how image works. One of these new weapons is layers, and Harris, Feister, and Mettler (the Ex Machina art team) are using them. Given the opportunities available through layers alone--to explore the metaphore of depth in two-dimensional image, for example--I would be a fool not to join in. So, ultimately, this isn't so much a confession as a simple slip from close-minded, self-flagellating orthodoxy.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:45 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DRAWING](#), [ILLUSTRATOR](#), [META](#)

THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2009

Plot Points: Not Top Lips (5)

I'm trying to get out of my story-making rut. In this post, I'll be free-writing as a way to reengage with the story. My apologies, this will probably be boring.

I'm at the point of illustrating the early crux of the story. Spektor's already had his bubble broken by Stedman, and he's now fiercely jealous of Jack. In a few panels, Spektor should start to express his utter disgust with Dayton and his current life--nearly hatred--so it can be swiftly replaced with heartbreak and deal-making immediately afterward. When he's fired, I want Spektor to suffer his final defeat of the day. A willful man like Spektor could sustain a single blow like a social failing or a layoff, but one after the other is enough to engage his will... and crush it.

I need a "dead" Spektor for a few reasons, I suppose. First, Spektor must be a channel through which much of Ohio may flow. He must be looking for alternatives to his own life in every friend on every street. Second, Spektor must be responsive enough to, erm, "listen to" Gretchen instead of just treating her poorly as he typically treats women.

I interrupt here for a side note: I've been troubled a lot by this Gretchen narrative, and I've thought of something that could serve as a clever trick at the end, whatever that end turns out to be. Instead of Spektor merrily calling Gretchen to dump her in favor of Ligia (a stupid idea), I want Spektor to write her a letter of some kind. But I want him to accidentally write another address on it, maybe even the Package's. No, wait! He could borrow stationary from Ligia's lab, accidentally use the the Package's address, and then the letter would return to Ligia. There we go--plot significance tied into the romance plot! Now I just have to decide exactly what I want this romance plot to do...

which brings us back to the subject of Gretchen. She's the missing connection between Max and Oswald, and so personifies a significant backstory. In the moment when Max left crime and Oswald entered it, she served as a fulcrum. I'm fascinated by the idea that her anorexia--by which she grew close to pill dealer, Max--only snapped when Max left the "business" and granted his turf to Oswald, whose brusque asexuality actually enabled her to end her dependency. But here's the catcher: how could Spektor have met Gretchen through Oswald? After all, if Oswald's a "safe" friend, then why would she welcome

a "predator" into her re-evaluative space? Unless, of course, Oswald's asexuality is outweighed by his shocking brutality, such that Gretchen seeks refuge from Oswald when she's near him and Spektor. Now I just have to imagine a situation in which Spektor could be around both Gretchen and Oswald that's not related to drugs.

Well, there's a powerful single-mindedness available to anorexics. They're actually incredibly crafty and dedicated, to the extent that they can ignore basic survival instincts. So I can imagine Gretchen pursuing a list of recovery tips like a scavenger hunt. "Keep a journal of your experiences." Check. "Start trying to appreciate different achievements in yourself and others." Check. I can imagine Spektor filling in a few bubbles at a time: maybe meeting one of her pre-ana goals of losing her v-card as well as giving her a good deal of non-sexual confidence. I've always imagined Gretchen to be a biochem student, and it's not unreasonable to send her to University of Dayton where she can meet Spektor at a bar along Brown Street. And if they actually meet rather conventionally, then the secret of Spektor's friends (Oswald, Max) can lie dormant.

Bizarrely, the drug-dealing connection gives me a solution to Scott's Quandry: what's in the box? The box is filled with Sonicare toothpaste boxes which are, in turn, filled with illegal pills. Spektor only realizes this because he smashes the box, and after seeing the pills he gets a call from Gretchen. Gretchen explains her past and tells him to never trust Max, which is what leads Spektor to rob Max.

Lemme' summarize my findings and see if I have any other questions:
Gretchen stopped buying pills after Oswald made her feel that she wasn't being judged;
Gretchen hooked up with Spektor to meet a goal;
Spektor has always made Gretchen feel appreciated as an intellect;
when Spektor tried to break up with Gretchen for a shot at Ligia, he accidentally sent the note to Ligia;
Spektor destroys the box and finds pills inside it;
Spektor steals Max's drug money only after he learns that Max had manipulated Gretchen.

I think that should cover it. I'm ready to write. Other than that, I've been watching a lot of interviews with Alan Moore.



To wanted, loathsome vanity: What it means to love Dayton



In the course of loving something, there are plenty of reasons to stop. And those reasons are often adjacent to the reasons to love it.

In this image, a serial thief (*don't love*) has crashed a truck into an RTA bus (*love*) directly in front of Courthouse Square (*love*), injuring ten (*don't love*) but guaranteeing a fast response from emergency services (*love*). Love--or at least "things that are loved"--are cruelly heterogeneous. Many moments of devastating pessimism are grounded in a corrupted optimism.

GK Chesterton has some very bright things to say about the ideas of optimism and pessimism, dismissing both in favor of an analogy to "patriotism". He writes (using the example of the shoddy resort town Pimlico),

It is not enough for a man to disapprove of Pimlico: in that case he will merely cut his throat or move to Chelsea. Nor, certainly, is it enough for a man to approve of Pimlico: for then it will remain Pimlico, which would be awful. The only way out of it seems to be for somebody to love Pimlico: to love it with a transcendental tie and without any earthly reason. If there arose a man who loved Pimlico, then Pimlico would rise into ivory towers and golden pinnacles; Pimlico would attire herself as a woman does when she is loved. For decoration is not given to hide horrible things: but to decorate things already adorable. A mother does not give her child a blue bow because he is so ugly without it. A lover does not give a girl a necklace to hide her neck. If men loved Pimlico as mothers love children, arbitrarily, because it is *THEIRS*, Pimlico in a year or two might be fairer than Florence. Some readers will say that this is a mere fantasy. I answer that this is the actual history of mankind. This, as a fact, is how cities did grow great. Go back to the darkest roots of civilization and you will find them knotted round some sacred stone or encircling some sacred well. People first paid honour to a spot and afterwards gained glory for it. Men did not love Rome because she was great. She was great because they had loved her.

That's all there is to it. Just exchange "Pimlico" with "Dayton", and I have nothing else to add to the matter... except maybe this: pictured is an East-West RTA bus, and I will only swear by the North-South routes.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2009

In Idolatry: Ordinality (1)

If ever a rant deserved retroactive justification, it was "[In Idolatry... number 1](#)". Here the argument is: we've got a cultural and theoretical term interpreted in a sense that doesn't apply to the way we really read. That term is "sequence". There are basically three arguments against the "ordinal" understanding of sequence (listed in order of strength):

- (1) that's not how people read *anything*, much less comics;
- (2) that's not how comics explicitly work;
- (3) if comics were always and everywhere ordinal, ordinality would pose more problems than it solved.

(1)

If you've ever taken a speed-reading course, you know that people don't read in lines. The human eye jumps around in what are known as "saccades", which basically means "really quick coordinated fixations". Biologically, this is because only part of each eyeball is hit and it needs to view a lot of space. For people like myself who make illusions, this means that it's a lot harder to "trick" an eyeball than, say, a camera. In any given second a reader may be fixating on five different spots in a comic illustration, so I must draw at least five good spots to look at. But who's to say that people are reading one frame at a time? To return to the speed-reading comparison, pupils are taught to capture "chunks" of words that can be assembled (milliseconds) later into meaningful phrases in the linguistic areas of the mind. The shocking part is this: this is nearly what we do all the time. (The difference is, of course, training the eye to stop waiting for meaning and symptomatically vocalizing.) Typos strike even fresh-eyed editors because a reading eye, looking for meaning, skips over several letters and words in every sentence. Wary web-writers use bold in dense paragraphs because they know it attracts the eye, and bold words serve as nodes for reading. Bold fonts and speed-reading make exceptional what is everyday and commonplace about reading: we're zig-zaggers!

So before I say anything else, allow me to toss out the idea that humans are Turing Machines. Turing Machines were first envisioned as electronic readers mounted above a spool, which moved left or right to display one character at a time in a certain and definite sequence. Because we are zig-zaggers, we are not Turing Machines. We must abandon the idea that every reader follows any set of symbols like a Turing Machine reads a scroll, *ordinally*. And once we give up the idea that sequence is always and everywhere ordinal, we meet the possibility that people experience comics two-dimensionally. Two dimensions? What's next?!

My favorite writer on this subject is Thierry Groensteen. He has taken up the idea that layout means something. (By "layout", I mean the way that the pictures go together in two dimensions. Groensteen has his own technical terms from which I'll abstain.) It's a very interesting subject for anyone who's ever looked at the space between panels and wondered why, how, what, etc. But it also follows directly from the above ideas: (a) human readers are zig-zaggers, and (b) zig-zaggers read two dimensions, so while (c) layout is the two-dimensional design

part of comics, that means (d) humans read layout. Ta-da!

I'll get to (2) and (3) in future posts.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:44 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

Notes on Joyce: Enjoy nest, Cool! (2)

As I said before, I've recently read *Dubliners*, which has inspired me to reflect on several city stories. At the same time I was reading Eisner's classic *New York*, but I interestingly feel that the comic with the greater resonance with Joyce is Moore-Gibbons' *Watchmen*.

The chief difference between *Dubliners* and Ohio Stories is a persistent center of narrative named Mike Spektor. For those of you who haven't read it, *Dubliners* is arguably a series of discrete short stories with only thematic and situational similarities. But without Unity of Plot, *Dubliners* still satisfies Unity of Place. The sequence of the stories is organized around stages of development in life, from childhood to adult social life and death, so that the effect is a simulated biography. Instead of following one organic life, a dozen Dubliners are sliced into pieces and reassembled to form a fictive Frankenstein. This approach is very tempting for the urbigraphers (excuse the neologism), as it captures the breadth of a city while still representing the individual experience. This is the approach that Eisner seems to take in *New York*.

New York organizes episodes according to certain urban institutions like the fire hydrant, the subway, and others. This is the critical difference between Eisner's book and Joyce's. Joyce hopes to represent the "big deal" of his city through the lens of a hundred lives: Eisner tries to represent the "big deal" of life through a hundred city lenses. In *New York*, the windows and walls weep for the inconstancy of humanity: in *Dubliners*, the men and women weep for the constancy of the city. Furthermore, the Eisnerian Metropolis is a two-dimensional story whose frames always indulge the inner angles of tunnels and bars. Much like the serpentine title sequences of *The Spirit*, this narrative is non-linear and unsympathetic to the human scale--much unlike the Frankenstein protagonist of *Dubliners*.

Dubliners is a linear narrative insofar as the short stories follow the natural chronology of youth; age; death. Yet Joyce embraces life's immortality, birth, at the end. In the chapter "The Dead", the final paragraph references every story in the book as Joyce links both ends together with a simulated coupling, a death, and a child. This symbolic renewal brings the story to begin again with the life of a child. Not for naught is the simultaneity of *Dubliners*, whereby rebirth is possible.

This type of cyclical narrative inspired a direct comparison to *Watchmen*. Grant Morrison recently explained to [Wizard Magazine](#),

[In] the original ending... the stupidest guy in the world [Seymour] picks up Rorschach's diary and wrecks the plan of the smartest man in the world. In the graphic novel, you know Ozymandias will fail. That's the horrible truth that lies in wait beyond the back cover. Veidt tries to save the world and does all these terrible things but we already know Rorschach's journal has to be found so that we can flip back to the beginning of the book's circular structure and begin reading again, this time with the horrible realization that it's actually Seymour and everyone else who's reading.

Watchmen is the most perfectly constructed story you could find—turn it around at any angle, and it reflects itself...

Watchmen provides for many, many loops and many layers of reading directly through its structure. The story becomes Rorschach's narrative, then Seymour's exposé, then a critical analysis of Seymour's article, and so on. [Alternatively, an ambitious professor could use this twist to demonstrate the concept of the implied author or reader.] And as Morrison observes, *Watchmen* reflects itself at every point. Can the same be said of *Dubliners*? That's arguable. But while comparing the two, a more important question waits: does *Watchmen* deserve to be critically considered here, on this blog, as another "city story"?

Yes. "City" is the 17th word in *Watchmen*, and not by mistake.

Watchmen takes a personal (The second saddest loss of the *Watchmen* adaptation by Snyder was the city life. Gone are the Pale Horsemen and the knotheads, signalling all the social instability that--alongside the spiraling wars--form the 20th Century of Moore and Gibbons.) For Rorschach, the city is (1) an extension of the body and (2) a mirror which reflects his own self. First comes his extended metaphor of New York City as a sickened corpus, but from that follows his sense of the city as a corporate self. Yet Kovacs' corporate self is composed of myriad reflections of himself: New Yorkers are either "good men... like President Truman" (or himself, presumably) or the criminals and prostitutes that constitute Rorschach's "business". Or as a further demonstration of Rorschach's corporate city-self, notice that his narration is partnered with a certain perspective--a perspective not his own. Walter Kovacs, the biological "eyes" of Rorschach, tracks the blood far below the narrative eye. And though that eye is certainly not Rorschach's own, it is significantly coupled with Rorschach's narrative presence. They together form puns like "true face" (with a smiley), "gutters full of blood", "'Save us!'" (alongside "The End is Near"), and lastly "stands on a brink" (while the detectives perch on the edge of "quite a drop"). *Watchmen*'s NYC is an extension and reflection on the individual experience.

This is the approach that Ohio Stories takes. The only true existence of things like "Dayton", "Columbus", or "Athens" is subjective experience, and this subjective experience is intrinsically narrative. So I am writing a narrative about one person engaged in a series of events. In every crowded town Mike Spektor sees himself in the life of another. In every city he sees his own opportunities manifest. I dread to type the "ultimate truth" of this relationship, but regardless I will try to capture it in a comic book.



And this is a collaboration of sorts between one of Ohio's greatest cartoonists and one of Dayton's best musicians. I present to you, Kim Deal as illustrated by R. Crumb. (Of course it's Crumb, look at the legs.)



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POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:55 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [CRUMB](#)

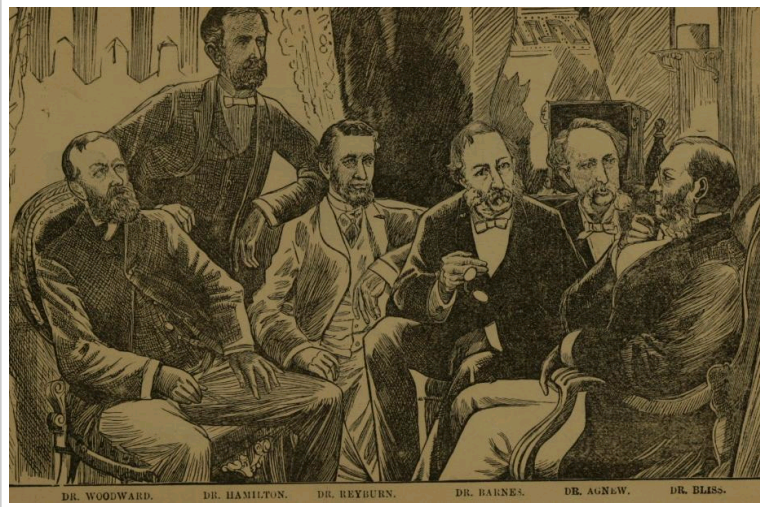
Openhearted, Dire Sainthood: Another Ohio President Dead (1)

I've been reading up on one of Ohio's proudest claims--our number of presidential office-holders. (To review, Ohio is the origin of both Harrisons, all the Williams, and most of the bloody shirt Republicans, and Taft [W. Harrison, U. Grant, R. Hayes, J. Garfield, B. Harrison, W. McKinley, W. Taft, W. Harding].) There are two things about Ohioan Presidents, though: they're almost always chosen in smoke-filled rooms; they die young. Because their presidencies are short-lived shams, they typically get stunning state funerals in recognition, and I've been reviewing some of these images for inspiration and ideas.

I'm starting in the middle with little-remembered James Garfield. There's not much too Garfield--he drove some Confederates out of Kentucky, had the good luck to be elected to Congress before eventually losing a battle, helped slip Rutheford B. Hayes into office,

and found his loyalty rewarded as a compromise candidate in 1880. He tried to please all comers while handing out federal posts--all except his arch enemies. A disgruntled member of a rival faction within the party put a bullet in Garfield's spine, which led to both (a) the invention of the metal detector and (b) the most easily preventable presidential death of all time. As the assassin's legal defense presented at trial, Garfield died from a bunch of fingers wiggling around in his wound.

But that doesn't make for good portraiture! See?!



Instead, a really dynamic shot worked better.



I like this image for a lot of reasons, but the chief one is its frank rhetorical dishonesty. This image of the Garfield martyrdom-cum-Blaine ascension could really only be better if Stalin were holding up the stroke-stricken body of Lenin and charging towards the traitor Trotsky.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 11:19 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: OHIO HISTORY



WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2009

I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas (4)

About these anagrams...

When I started this project, I was very much committed to an understanding of comics as an ordered medium. For starters, that's how I felt motivated to write so many posts on this made-up idea of "ordinality". Over the summer I read a very formative book called *The System of Comics* by Thierry Groensteen, in which the author lays out a program for reading comics inspired by the interrelations of panels, a system he calls "arthrology". While arthrology deals largely with the two-dimensional settings of panels, I felt drawn back to the fundamental question of panel-to-panel transitions.

One of my founding questions in this project has been about the interrelation of sequence and meaning. In other texts, rearranging the sequence of something produces an entirely different meaning: ergo anagrams. In the visual arts, I became interested in a similar trick called "ambigrams". I've made these for years now for any number of friend's signatures or phrases. If you'd like to see one, check the "Dayton Stories" written in the banner of the blog. It's rotationally symmetrical, meaning that if you rotate it, it looks the same. The banner of the blog also has a picture of the downtown Dayton skyline reflected in three different ways and edited for aesthetics. The experiment driving this is concerned with sequence, change, and meaning.

Sorry to be so slow to inform. I realized the other day that all these stupid anagrams have just been a one-man joke.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:12 PM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: [META](#) [META](#)

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2009

I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas (3)

After I handed in the final materials for this project to my readers, I sat in on a lecture that used a five-dollar word for what I've been trying to do all this time: *autoethnography*. It's extremely satisfying to find this sort of capstone for the experience.

As I understand it, an autoethnography is a tool for making meaning

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ABOUT ME

EVEN THEMES

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in the back-and-forth ("discourse") between the self and society. There's also an element of resistance in autoethnography: some dominant beliefs about the group are confirmed, some are complicated, and some are parodied. I like this term because, in the process of making *Ohio Stories*, I had particular goals to merge the personal and the popular, and to demonstrate the many-parted-ness ("heterogeneity") of Ohio.

While reflecting on *Ohio Stories* as autoethnography, it occurred to me that *Ohio Stories* isn't very autobiographical. Then it occurred to me that it is: after all, this is a story of young, mostly white, people from Dayton around the age of 22. My characters talk like me and do the things that I might do. I know there's a body of literature on the contemporary issues of autobiography, so suffice it to say that I've encountered them firsthand. Despite my limited introduction to the subject, this is why I believe *Ohio Stories* more comfortably carries the heading of autoethnography.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 10:39 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2009

Sane Oddity: Dayton Dies

I had to do some research into complaints about Dayton, so I went to [the comments section](#) of the Dayton Daily News. Here are some of the most striking quotes I found:

- when residency lifts, HELLO MIAMI COUNTY, GOODBYE DAYTON...eight hours a day will be enough for me..Ill watch them kill each other in my rearview mirror as i head north on I75. I will then come back in the morning and serve another eight hours and then watch it all in my rearview mirror again...THANK YOU BEANE
- I love this city. It's my city and I intend to save it with hard work a positive attitude and a little common sense. Who cares how dangerous they claim our city is. This is a bustling town thats down on its luck not a convent.
- Passenger trains will create thousands of NEW jobs for Dayton! Also they can make the trains and the streetcars in Moraine plant!
- dayton died a long long time ago.....its not even listed as a city anymore....its a place to stop for gas..if necessary....and leave.....dayton looks best in your rear view mirror

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 4:30 AM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [DAYTON STORIES](#)

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2009

I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas (2)

Why did I make a single narrative? If I wanted this project to be about Ohio, why didn't I do the work of a cartographer or an anthropologist? Why a comic book? The short answer is that Ohio is something that is experienced by people. And like most experiences, it's both fragmentary and narrative.

"Fragmentary and narrative" have become two operative terms in my recent thinking on comics. As I discussed in the post on [Fredric Jameson](#), comics can be described both in terms of temporal and spatial reasoning. But unlike the [great narrative maps of old](#), comics are fractured: this sets them apart among other forms of spatial-plus-temporal thinking. Because the act of reading comics relies on gap-filling (or whatever we actually do in our skulls), comics can absorb a great deal of the broken, incomplete, absurd, and non-linear. For a great demonstration of cyclical narrative and the comics medium, please read the colossal *Jimmy Corrigan*.

I knew that there had to be something non-linear about *Ohio Stories*. I knew of only two similar experiments in persona and place: *Dubliners* and *New York*. *Dubliners* narrates place by breaking the stages of a human life up over dozens of loosely related experiences, unified by theme and place. *New York* narrates place by organizing human stories beneath the themes provided by the fixtures of city life. Both basically take the modernist perspective that the urban experience supercedes what an individual can experience.

I agree and disagree with this stance. Obviously, I chose to write a "main" character. But on the other hand, I wrote a main character at his nadir of identity security. I wrote a main character because I believe that the individual experience best captures the realities and differences of Ohio life. I wrote an "empty" lead because I wanted him to try on certain identities like clothes. On the other other hand, I made Mike Spektor adapt the styles of various characters to ultimately insist that he can't do it.

I decided to portray a fractured space with a fractured character in a fractured medium. I also believe that the best way to do this is with unity of place, unity of actor, and unity of plot.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:37 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes (4)

I somehow forgot that two of the big names in webcomics today are from Cincinnati. But Drew from Toothpaste for Dinner and Natalie Dee have an odd perspective on both Ohio and the Queen City.

You may recall my earlier fascination with the Toledo War as a defining moment of statehood. Possibly inspired by that, Drew made this gag for Married to the Sea:



The "Cincinnati War" was a bloodless territory dispute that took place from 1878-1880. Mayors from Columbus, Cleveland, Dayton, Toledo, and other major Ohio cities assembled in April, 1878, and issued an order formally evicting Cincinnati from the state of Ohio. The mayor of Cincinnati at the time, Murray Seasongood, replied to the eviction notice with a telegram simply reading "NUH UH." The state of Kentucky, wanting neither the industries nor the residents of Cincinnati, responded with a proposal to make Cincinnati its own state, and offered materials and labor to construct a forty-foot wall enclosing the new city-state.

Tensions ran high for two years, until the assembly came to an agreement with the city council of Cincinnati: The city would remain a part of Ohio, but its residents would be forced to identify themselves by saying "Please?" instead of "Excuse me," and by referring to green peppers as "mangoes."

The point here being that Cincinnati is somewhat alien to the rest of the state. I say this as a youth who grew up watching Cincinnati stations and an hour away from the city: Cincinnati isn't even like its closest neighbors.

On the other side of this alien-ness, Natalie Dee picks on Ohio a bit:



Obviously, I can't attack Dee for her lack of Ohio pride--mainly because Ohioans dislike their state more and more intimately than any other group short of Michiganders. But the vital point here is that I think that Dee & Drew have a personal knowledge of Cincinnati's interstitial status.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:07 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: CINCINNATI

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2009

Now Daring: On Drawing (2)

One thing that I tried to get at with [this post](#) and [this one](#) is that there are plenty of alternatives to what I've derisively dubbed "the black line". This is probably a better demonstration of this idea.



What you've got here is a quick run-down of four of the stylitsic "suites" used in this project. There should be a post about this concept in the future, but allow me to explain just a small bit of what you're seeing.

Columbus was meant to be a knock-off of the American superhero style, or at least the dominant style between 1940 and 1960. Notice the much-maligned black line separating linguistic objects and colors. Everything's so neat! And this style is by far and away the easiest to draw.

Spektor's look for much of the book is supposed to reflect [a couple things](#). It's inspired largely by the sketching style taught in American instruction. He's got a skeleton of geometric shapes, overlaid with a loose sketch and some heavy inks. The difference is, though, that each generation of this drafting process is visible in the Spektor style. "It's a symbol or something."

Dayton is, admittedly, my baby. This style is meant to be a revision of the four-color style of old, one reappropriated to modern vector graphics technology. Sometimes I go up the wall when I see the latest Fantagraphics illustrator go to extreme ends (ageing paper, salvaging ancient brushes) to try to maintain "that look" of sixties or seventies comics. Whatever virtue there is in those old styles comes not from the exact tools that the artists used, but from the economic conditions that made them popular. Vector graphics are the new screenprinting, in a sense. If you know how to look for them, they're everywhere. And in a

world of Obamacons, the new four-color comic is going to be made of four layers of vectorized blobs.

Cleveland rose out of two basic impulses. First, I wanted to pay tribute to Crumb's sketchy, frenetic illustrations. Second, I wanted to use a knock-off of chiaroscuro for the high-pitched action during the Cleveland period. I rolled those together and this is what came out.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 8:46 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: DRAWING

Oh Ho, Poorish Spiel: Ohio Philosophers (2)

By an odd twist of fate, it looks like I'm going to make a second part to this "series" on Ohio Philosophers. Today's honoree is Fredric Jameson.

There's a moment on the third-to-last page of the script where Spektor reassures Ligia that he's getting an education, and tells her that he's been reading some Fredric Jameson on loan to him from the shop. It's a weird moment, considering that most Ohioans don't read literary theory by modern Marxists. But, despite it's weirdness, it's inspired by reality. The only time I actually attended a discussion hosted by the OSU chapter of the ISO, I met a student-cum-auto worker who developed from an ordinary schmoe to a real academic. As I chatted with him, he told me about working on the assembly line in Loraine (Ohio, where Chevy does final assembly for the Cobalt), the union, and how his union representative persuaded him to begin reading Marxist theory. He rattled off passages from a litany of Scandanavian Socialists as he told me about his own experiences trying to radicalize today's youth. I think that Ohio's particularly ripe with this sort of "native genius" (see: Harvey Pekar), and that's part of what I wanted to capture with Spektor's third act.

UPDATE: I can't believe I forgot to mention that some of the best thinkers and speakers are manifestly working class. Eric Hoffer, a personal favorite, was a lifelong stevedore. Eric Blair came up with his best ideas while tramping around London and as a plongeur in Paris. Mark Twain; the list goes on. Suffice it to say that it's reasonable that Mike Spektor could end up reading Jameson.

Fredric Jameson's a pretty cool guy. If I had to summarize his theories in three words, I would say, "Context counts, critics." First, Jameson's got this intellectual Marxist-Structuralist hybridity, which is to say that he's recognized both that art is produced in a social situation and that the cultural product is better addressed in its own terms than those of economic theory. Sure, he sometimes makes those silly intellectual mistakes like trying to atomize a verbal construct by affixing "-eme" to the end of a latinate word (here I refer to the "ideologeme"), but who doesn't do such silly things? Your author certainly does. Jameson's latest and most valiant work has been to build a dialectic understanding of postmodernism, which I won't dare summarize.

The especially salient aspect of Jameson's work for this project comes from his idea that postmodern logic employs spatial, as opposed to temporal, reasoning. Space vs. time? That sounds like a comics concept to me! But Jameson's point largely concerns (a) the shift away from "deep time" as written by Proust and Mann, and (b) the rise in critical discourse of spatial metaphors--presumably in contrast with a temporal reason prominent before modernity.

My project complicates this line of thinking. If Jameson proposes that spatialized logic overcomes temporal thought in the postmodern intellect, then are comics on the way in or the way out? They might be headed out because comics are a narrative medium, and slavishly devoted to time. They might be on the way in because the illusion of time is generated by a spatial system (layout, arthrology, whatever you like to call the arrangement of panels on a page) which both draws on and challenges our reading conventions for linguistic texts. And more importantly, so what? The answer to all three is that comics represent a weird hybrid medium of spatial and temporal constructs. Comics, in Jameson's theories, occupy a strange moment in the history of modernism, between constructed time and operative space. Weird, huh?

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 1:39 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [META](#), [META META](#)

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2009

Isn't Crying Prize: Yinzer Scripting

There's a spot in the Cleveland suite that's going to be confusing. One minor character speaks with a unique Pittsburgh accent, often called a "Yinzer" accent because of the "yinz" plural second person descended from the Scots-Irish "you-ones". I'm transcribing this dialect for a character for the only reason that dialect should ever be used: to make the character and his environment seem alien and unintelligible.

I have to admit, though, yinzers have one of the weirdest accents I've ever heard--up there with Afrikaaner English. For an example, here's a guy in a luchadore mask imitating it in night vision, for some reason:



One other note on dialect: I also transcribe a shoddy Brazillian accent for a minor character's testimony over a Christian radio station. This young lady explains the peculiarities of this accent pretty directly:



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 9:59 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: CLEVELAND, WRITING

I'm Niftiest Wrongdoer: Side Note from Writing

As I said before, I've been cleaning up much of this storyline to make it cleaner, tighter, and better. However, there's one storyline that I'm particularly sad to let go. I originally wrote a sub-plot for Jack Stedman in Tanzania that goes something like the following.

Throughout Spektor's various encounters with old friends in different cities, he would hear various updates about the status of Jack Stedman, who won a Gates award to study fractal urban planning in Tanzania. With Oswald, Spektor hears that Stedman had been kidnapped by a militant faction of separatists in the middle of a civil war. Of course, Spektor takes a dark pleasure in this news, especially as Oswald had given him an illusory leg up on delivering the package. Then Ligia tells him that Jack had negotiated his way out of captivity, frustrating Spektor. On his ride up to Cleveland, the radio announces that Stedman had been elected the leader of the separatists. Then, after the drama in Cleveland, Spektor hears now that Stedman has concluded peace talks between the warring factions, and that a grateful nation has chosen him as their leader. Spektor, naturally, is broken by this point.

I think this was a funny sub-plot, but it adds little to nothing to the story or the themes I'm trying to write.

POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 5:12 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: STEDMAN, WRITING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2009

Nice, Cheaper Intrusions: Cincinnati Superheroes (3)

There's a YouTube comedian who's produced two videos that I think are useful to understanding some of the internal fractions in Ohio. They underscore three key points. First, urban Ohioans can stereotype the rural portion of the state as populated by an obese army of uneducated hill-folk. Second, urban and rural Ohioans alike can

stereotype their cityscapes as dead, empty husks in a cloudy limbo.
Third, nobody gets Cincinatti. That place makes no sense.



POSTED BY EVEN THEMES AT 6:54 PM 0 COMMENTS
LABELS: [CINCINNATI](#), [OHIO HISTORY](#)

I'm Bugs Baddie: Big Dumb Ideas (1)

It's time for this blog to start tossing out some of the big ideas that drove this project. I'll start with a little personal intellectual history.

Long before I drew comics, I drew maps. I worked for the Montgomery County Auditor as an intern cartographer over two years, which served as my first introduction to vector-based drafting. It's my

nature to understand these experiences as part of an intellectual project, so I started investigating topology as a metaphysical concept. Down the line, this introduced me to parts of set theory and continuous sequences. I also took some classes and read some books on urban geography, which placed a disappointingly diagnostic approach to understanding cities. Fortunately, this experience led me to poke my head into the door of sorting, especially the pancake sorting problem.

Obviously, this is not a math thesis; however, these ideas to pan out. On the humanities side, I started out with a strong allegiance to the semiotic view of comics. Structuralism seemed very attractive to me, both as a student of literature and a hobbyist philosopher. I tried to read some French-language journals of semiotics but burned my brain on the myriad classes of symbols and my own bad translation. The Situationist International was about the only message that I understood at the end of this. I stepped out of the "room" of the humanities for a while to focus on economics for a while. By the time I returned, Thierry Groensteen's *System of Comics* had been translated into English. I was enthralled by his thorough denuding of the semiotic approach, and since then I've been highly skeptical of semiotic claims. It's possible that my time in economics jarred me sufficiently to foreground this change: I spent so much time questioning the axioms of Chicago-school economics that I grew hostile to similar prescriptive systems. In fact, I recall naming Austrian economics in my initial assault on ordinality: I drew the name for this strawman from Von Mises.

As this blog demonstrates, most of my critiques of deductive theories comes from cognitive theory. I've cited Daniel Dennett, who I find insufferable but informative. I'm also attracted to the ideas of the behavioral economist Robert Shiller and reliably enthralled by Steven Pinker and Susan Blackmore. The basic framework supporting these various theorists is that the best theories of mind and cognition account for the physical structures of the brain, Chomsky and Descartes be damned.

Recently, I've been thrust back into the humanities and bombarded with perspectives on the natures of space and the mind. I've mentioned *Dubliners* in this blog; *Borderlands* and *Brideshead Revisited* have also influenced my thinking. Along with Evelyn Waugh, other XXth century English Catholic writers have also influenced my thinking. First, Waugh's construction of Brideshead is a touchstone for my own thinking about Ohio cities. Second, GK Chesterton's chapter, "The Universal Patriot" is the inspiration for most of the monologues in this comic. GK Chesterton's theology has enraptured me slightly more than Whitehead's Process Theology. Process Theology's close cousin, Process philosophy is an extremely potent system for considering comics. (My busride description of process theory is that the world is "made" out of experiences, put in sequence, that the individual *processes* into something like life. Of course, for experience to be the atom of existence, it should be sufficiently dynamic for the construction of the universe: Leibnitz theorized a system of monads; Process philosophy requires a system called "mereotopology" to define the interrelations of the parts.) It's rumored that Waugh himself was aware of and interested in Process philosophy: it's visible in his peculiar portrayal of Brideshead.

All of these concepts, hopefully, should be called up as I wind down some of the Big Dumb Ideas of this project.

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I've got this cousin in Kentucky, worked in the coal mines. And every day he would walk out of work with this big wheelbarrow full of sand and rocks.

And of course all the bosses were suspicious. The guard at the gate checked these wheelbarrows every day. He'd poke through the sand and stab it and shake it, and he never found anything in forty years. And after those forty years were up, my cousin finally retired from the mine.



So the guard finally asks him. He says, 'We know you've been stealing something all these years.'



He says, 'I'm not going to turn you in, just tell me what you did.'



And my cousin says, 'You've seen how it's done.'



He says, 'I've been stealing wheelbarrows for forty years.'

'And I couldn't have done it without your help,' he says.



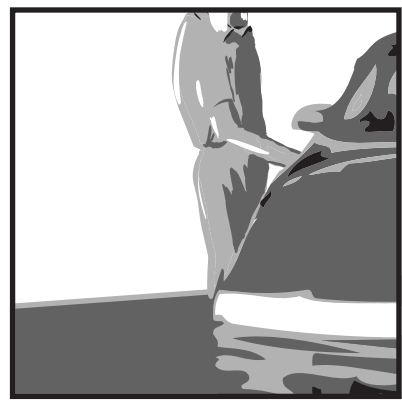


If that was Dayton, it'd be the companies leaving every day.

And they'd steal jobs and leave us with wheelbarrows, y'know?



Clockin' out. See you guys later.



Do you guys have any dark roasts, like a Guatemalan bean?



Well, what here is made with soy protein?

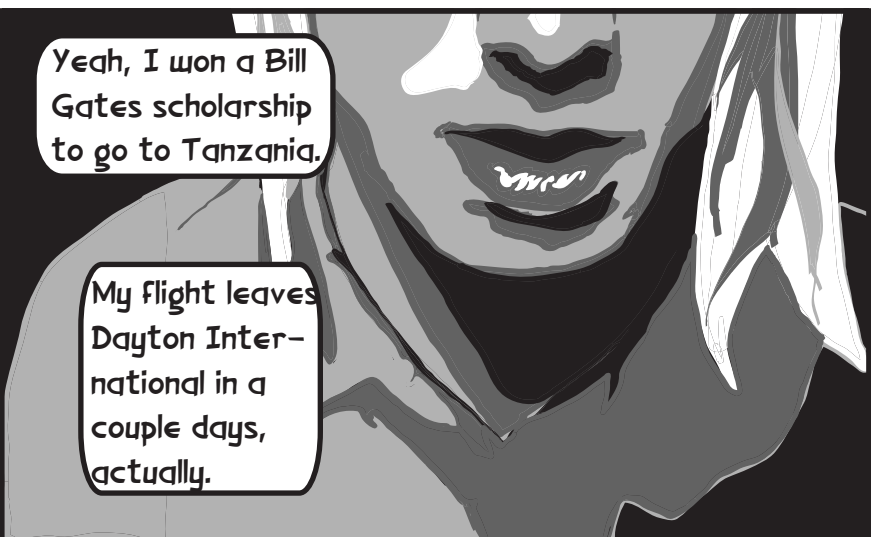



I know this is a donut place, but it can't all be junk, can it?



If this guy finishes, I want a half dozen mixed.

Well if they don't have-





It's a pretty cool deal. I'm going to investigate fractal-based methods of social organization and inflation adaptation to help reorganize developmental aid strategies.

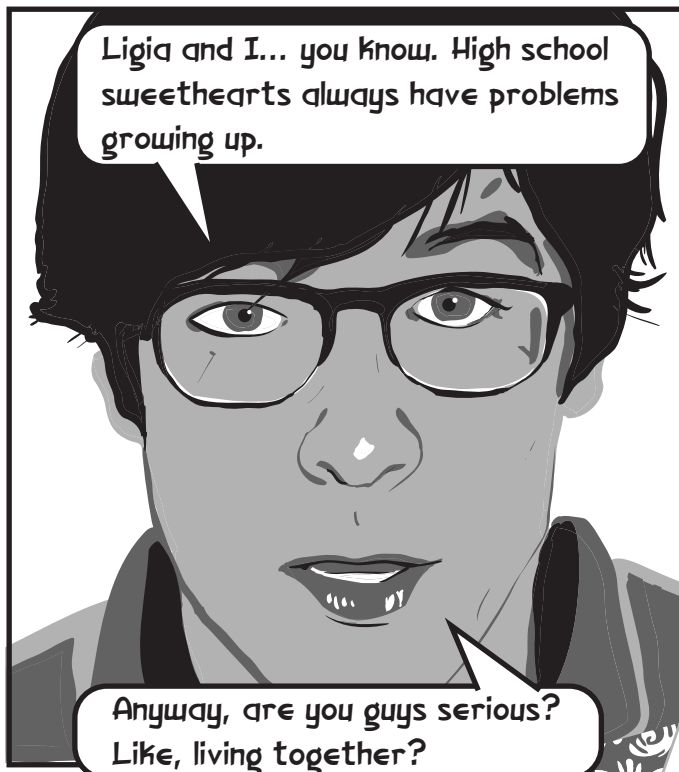
How about you, man? What are you up to? Where are you going?

Um.

I'm just working this job in freight. It's like Fed-Ex, but for returned packages.

It's not fancy, but it pays the rent.

Oh! I remembered—I'm dating this new girl, Gretchen. She's completely brilliant. You'd like her. She's smart like Ligia.



Ligia and I... you know. High school sweethearts always have problems growing up.

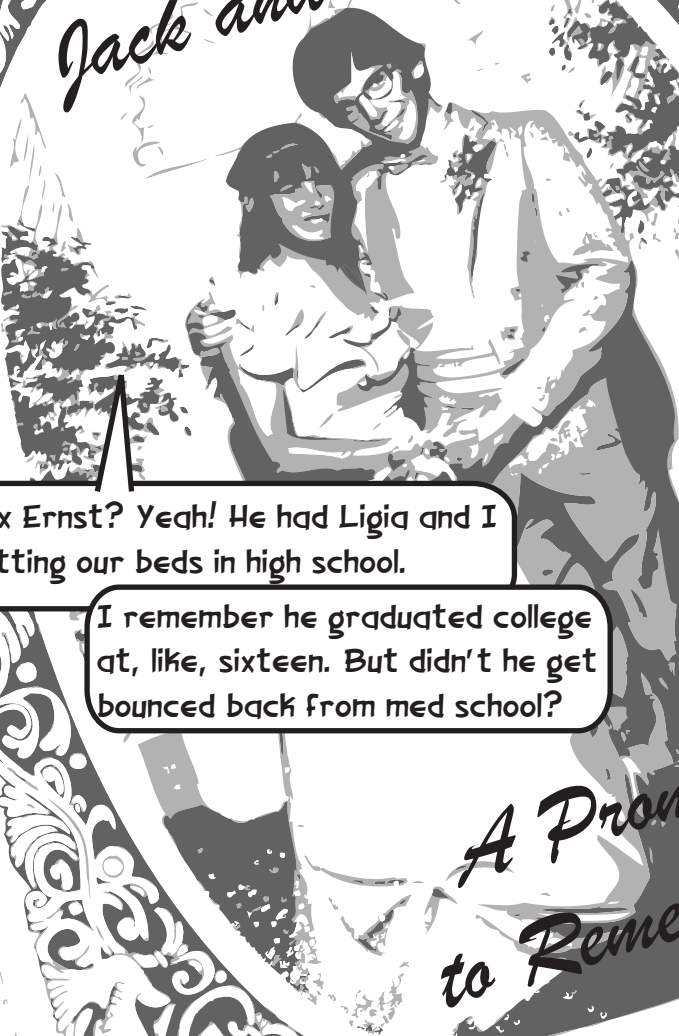
Anyway, are you guys serious? Like, living together?



Nah, I'm splitting a place by the airfield with a guy. Do you remember Max Ernst?

MAX'S
HOMESCHOOL PROM SR. YEAR

Jack and Ligia



Max Ernst? Yeah! He had Ligia and I wetting our beds in high school.

I remember he graduated college at, like, sixteen. But didn't he get bounced back from med school?

A Prom
to Remember



He says they said he wasn't mature enough. It's sort of made him crazy, though.




I don't understand a single thing that guy says.

And he makes the rent by playing World of Warcraft all day.




Stupid noobs.



Hey Max, I have a question.

Yes my darb?



I've been thinking about getting a taking off.



I want to get a transfer to another handling center.

Maybe Hamilton, you know? Things are growing there.



This town is dead and buried, and I'm not going to live as another hick in a flyover state.



I just got to call my boss. He's got connections. He can get me places.

I just can't take it to have smart snobs think they're so much better than me..





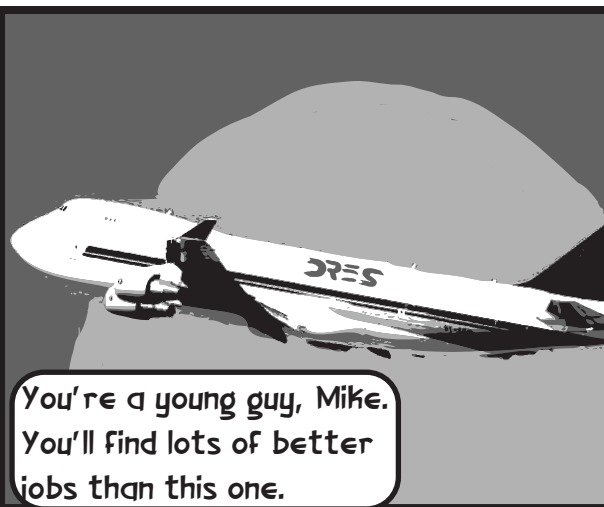
All I need is for Carl to transfer me, and-

Hey Carl, I was just going to call you.

Mike, I've got some bad news, brother.

Corporate is shutting down the whole business. Everything. Everywhere. As of today.

You didn't have the seniority to get a severance package, but-

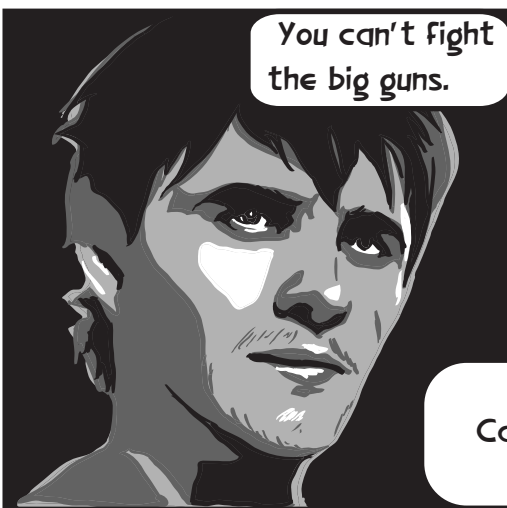


You're a young guy, Mike. You'll find lots of better jobs than this one.



Carl, you got to help me out here.

There's nothing to do help here, Mike. This comes straight from corporate.



You can't fight the big guns.



Carl, please.



Mike, all that's left to do is clear the last boxes off the line.

I just...



I just need to lie down.

Mike? Mikey? Are you okay?


Listen bud, there might be a job for you in this. We've got some problem packages...

How would you feel about working delivery?



Hey Gretchen?

Mike! Oh my God, I just saw on TV that your company went under.



Gretchen, I'm getting out of Dayton.

Page 1 One one-third height unframed illustration at top; a framed one-third panel below; two framed third-height panels at bottom

Panel	Description	Dialog
1.1	Bird's eye view of the Chillicothe earth works	<p>SPEKTOR Caption: It's a great deal. I figure out where to return the freight. I return-to-sender and DRES pays me five hundred.</p> <p>GRETCHEN Caption: Five hundred from what? Chapter seven? This isn't any way to live, Michael.</p> <p>GRETCHEN Caption: I've been there. I know what it's like to live for exactly one day. That's how it is to recover from ana.</p>
1.2	Overhead view of interwoven hands. Spektor's is sketchy. Gretchen's is thin but tense.	<p>GRETCHEN Caption: But I thought that you were part of the next chapter in my life. I get over ana, I enroll in med school, and I meet this funny, handsome guy...</p> <p>SPEKTOR Caption: It's a good deal. It's easy work. And maybe if I start off right with Oswald, we could get some sort of partnership going.</p>
1.3	Small: profile of Gretchen, alarmed	<p>GRETCHEN You're going to work with Oswald?</p>
1.4	Medium: profile of Spektor	<p>GRETCHEN Mike, Oswald was there in a really bad part of my life.</p> <p>Don't trust him.</p>

Page 2 One large panel in the top-left, unframed; one thin panel on the right; three tall, thin panels along the bottom--the bottom panels break up a front view of the Athena Theatre.

Panel	Description	Dialog
2.1	Headshot of Oswald	SPEKTOR Oswald! How's it going?
2.2	Spektor, smiling	SPEKTOR How's Athens been treating you?
2.3	Silhouettes of Oswald & Spektor in front of the Athena	OSWALD It's all right if we get moving. I can't sit around 40 minutes, you know.
2.4	Silhouettes begin walking right	SPEKTOR Some important business?
2.5	Silhouettes near edge of Athena	OSWALD You could say that. I make a lot of enemies.

Page 3 Two panels on top, left unframed, right framed; Two wide panels below.

Panel	Description	Dialog
3.1	Exterior of old brick apartment building, view from corner.	SPEKTOR So this is the apartment that bounty hunting bought?
3.2	Oswald opens door to apartment; POV over Spektor's right shoulder.	OSWALD You could say that. You looking to get into it?
3.3	Spektor looks at pair of pistols on a table.	SPEKTOR Um... I'll stick to delivery.
3.4	Oswald sits down on the floor, surrounded by newspapers.	OSWALD Delivery? Like UPS? SPEKTOR Like reverse UPS. Return to sender.
3.5	Oswald smiles, holding paper that says, "Failure to Appear in Court"	OSWALD You could say that's what I do.

Panel	Description	Dialog
4.1	Spektor stands with arms crossed in white space, looks to bottom-left.	SPEKTOR I actually wanted to see you about that. There's a job that I'd like to, uh, sub-contract.
4.2	Spektor lets right arm hang, holds elbow with left hand, looks directly ahead.	SPEKTOR It's just a package. You get \$500 if you take it home. I'd do it, but I can't figure out what the address is. The label's incomplete.
4.3	Spektor holds up hands in offering gesture, looks upward.	SPEKTOR So, um, I thought I would sell you the contract for \$200. You deliver the freight, you get the full \$500 at completion. It's a good deal.
4.4	Oswald looks curiously at Spektor.	
4.5	Oswald laughs.	OSWALD Spektor, I'm flattered.

Page 5 Two panels at top, right unframed; one wide framed panel in the middle; open white space at the bottom

Panel	Description	Dialog
5.1	Low-angle side shot of Oswald sitting cross-legged	OSWALD But I'm not cosmopolitan like you. I can't go rushing all around the state. You could say I've got business here.
5.2	Picture of the package, looking shabby	OSWALD It's more important that you do it. You need closure on this return-to-sender business.
5.3	Wide angle: Oswald stands up as Spektor watches	OSWALD: So I'll do you one better. You don't know where to take the package? Gimme' the address.
5.4	Wide-angle view of the package with label visible, framed by Spektor & Oswald's shoulders	OSWALD Let's run it through the system.

Page 6 Checkerboard pattern, three-by-three; odd panels unframed, even panels framed. Background tones of panels fade to black in bottom-right corner, white in top-left.

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.1	Oswald types package's address into an iPhone	SPEKTOR Caption: He plugged it into this cool phone app that bounty hunters use.
6.2	Spektor & Gretchen walk in a grassy area (Chillicothe mound)	SPEKTOR The problem is that there are, like, dozens of "C" cities in Ohio, and even more Euclid Avenues.
6.3	Oswald lists the cities on one hand, looking up & to the right	OSWALD You might need to go to Centerville, Centerburg, or any of the Center Townships. That's not to mention Clay Center, or the Clay Townships, or Clayton. And then...
6.4	Gretchen frowns, slightly frustrated	GRETCHEN So what? You can check them all--it's not like you have to skip work.
6.5	Oswald holds up phone, assumes explanatory posture	OSWALD This program isolates the registered addresses that match the address in "C", Ohio.
6.6	Spektor gestures plaintively	SPEKTOR It would take a month to do all that myself, and I have six days until DRES gets "restructured". I can't collect after next Friday.
6.7	Oswald touches mouth with left hand, looks down and to the left	OSWALD You only need to check in Cleveland, Columbus, and Chillicothe.

Page 6 Checkerboard pattern, three-by-three; odd panels unframed, even panels framed. Background tones of panels fade to black in bottom-right corner, white in top-left.

Panel	Description	Dialog
6.8	Head-on view of Gretchen, frowning	GRETCHEN Does this mean that you've partnered up with Oswald?
6.9	Spektor from the right, smiling	SPEKTOR That's so cool.

Page 7 Page split along a down-right diagonal (Panel 1 is top-right; Panel 2 is bottom-left)

Panel	Description	Dialog
7.1	Overhead view of Serpant Mound	SPEKTOR Is there something underneath all of this Oswald-suspicion?
7.2	Cross-section of Oswald's building, reaching down into the tunnels below the street.	SPEKTOR How did you get so good at digging things up?

Page 8 Max sitting on the floor of a room littered with thick books
on medicine, looking spooky

Panel	Description	Dialog
8.1		Caption: Do you remember when I used to hang out with Max?

Panel	Description	Dialog
9.1	Max stoops forward, begins to pull up floorboard	OSWALD Caption: I was bored in high school and he was turned down from med school, in a really bad place.
9.2	View inside floorboard, revealing plastic bag with pill bottles inside--labeled things like "Oxycodone" and "Diazepam"	OSWALD Caption: So we started a little business, mostly personal contracts. He had the schooling and I was willing to get my hands dirty.
9.3	POV above Max, who is opening up his mattress; sheets and pillows are scattered to one side on the bed.	OSWALD Caption: We made a healthy profit off of it. It was enough for me to drop out & move out to Athens.
9.4	Max's hand stuffs the bag of pill bottles inside a mattress already stuffed with large bills.	OSWALD Caption: I've basically been doing the same thing ever since. Do you want to come along tonight and watch me work?

Page 10 Four wide panels, vertically stacked, with alternating bright and dark scenes.

Panel	Description	Dialog
10.1	Interior of car; Spektor--center of frame--talking on cell phone, driving	SPEKTOR It was Halloween, Gretchen. I was going to go out with him. Besides, he said he'd take me through the tunnels.
10.2	Athens street scene; Oswald in the foreground, left side of frame; looking grave	OSWALD Let's go to work.
10.3	Exterior of Spektor driving car, on right, approaching "Now Leaving Athens" sign in left of frame	SPEKTOR Oh yeah, Athens is a city built into a hill. There are secret tunnels everywhere. Of course I was careful.
10.4	Athens street scene; Spektor in the foreground, right side of frame; grinning	SPEKTOR Time to do something spooky!

Page 11 Four long side-by-side panels, forming an expanded street tableau; Halloween revelers throughout the background in costume; brick street below

Panel	Description	Dialog
11.1	Costumed drunkards wandering the cobblestones; Oswald's off-panel	OSWALD You know the Underground Railroad used to hide fugitive slaves in Athens' tunnels? Hold this flashlight, will you? Then they would come out and assume these new names and new jobs as free people.
11.2	Spektor, facing down-right, shines the flashlight in line with his gaze	SPEKTOR Makes sense. You leave your job, leave your home--who are you? You... the slaves weren't the same people after that, I guess.
11.3	Oswald is hunched over a manhole cover in the middle of the street with a crowbar	OSWALD I don't buy it. If you're a slave, you're a slave. If you're a bum, you're a bum. That other stuff is just an excuse for doing stuff you don't believe in.
11.4	Halloween partier in foreground, wearing demonic mask	OSWALD Job, work, home, all that's a mask. Or an excuse for who you really are.

Page 12 Split into three thirds, top two thirds are part of one splash panel, bottom third is in three panels; after first part of splash panel polarity flips and all colors are inverted--this holds for as long as Oswald & Spektor are

Panel	underground background & panel into	Diagrams are now
12.1	Top half of Oswald's bust, head-on, descending into the tunnel; normal coloring	
12.2	Bottom half of Oswald's bust, head-on, descending into the tunnel; inverted coloring	OSWALD At the bottom, it's pretty black and white.
12.3	Spektor beginning to descend, POV from Oswald's flashlight, shining up	SPEKTOR Then how can you find it? Who someone is, deep down?
12.4	Oswald looking up, pointing flashlight up; waist-up shot	OSWALD You are who you are. You do what you do. Like...
12.5	View down underground tunnel, filled with steam pipes and valves; "lit" by inverted flashlight	OSWALD I'm a nice guy, but you could say I'm a big bastard on the job.

Panel	Description	Dialog
13.1	Spektor & Oswald walk through the tunnel, crouching	SPEKTOR But that doesn't bother you since these guys are bond-jumpers, right?
13.2	Oswald shimmies his way over an obstruction while Spektor waits his turn.	
13.3	Oswald & Spektor are on opposite sides of the obstruction	OSWALD You could say that.
13.4	Spektor shimmies over the same obstruction	SPEKTOR So the people who chased slaves down here, weren't they just old-fashioned bounty hunters?

Page 14 The top half of the page is dominated by a single unframed panel; two rectangular panels in the lower half

Panel	Description	Dialog
14.1	Oswald's upset faced, viewed from the lower left	OSWALD It's return to sender. Everyone gets what they deserve. And if they get it, they deserve it. It's simple.
14.2	Close-up of Oswald as he shouts, leans in, points up	OSWALD If I stranded you in here, who's fault would that be? It's yours, because you shouldn't have been so credulous.
14.3	View of manhole cover in a brick street; normal polarization from here on	OSWALD You could have fought me at every step, but you chose to follow me. If something happens down here, it's not my fault. It's not the tunnel's fault. It's your own fault.

Panel	Description	Dialog
15.1	Overhead view of Spektor's car along US 33	SPEKTOR No, he didn't do anything crazy then. That came later.
15.2	View of Columbus skyline in the distance, as seen from US 33 to the southeast	SPEKTOR Gretchen, what exactly was Oswald and Max's business?
15.3	Low POV, almost shin-height; an anonymous leg--from foot to thigh--wearing jeans and sneakers in foreground; Oswald--full body viewed--side-kicking knee in midground; Spektor and Halloween revellers in the background; Oswald is at the point of contact of a kick that will pulverize this knee	

Panel	Description	Dialog
16.1	Man from the last page, mid-fall; bending at the knee	OSWALD Did you think you could just take money that wasn't yours?
16.2	Oswald kicks his victim's head	OSWALD Did you think that you could just run away to Athens? Party it up a little? Hide out from Ross?
16.3	Spektor looks away to the right, horrified	OSWALD Ross sent me. He says you can't run away from your problems. You're a deadbeat in Columbus and you're a deadbeat in Athens.
16.4	A small circle of partiers has gathered around Oswald and his victim, watching; Spektor walks away from this circle	OSWALD I need all of you to stand still as I check this guy's wallet for my employer. He's got some bad debt that needs restructuring.

Page 17 Splash/break page introducing Columbus and the Columbus style of illustration

Panel	Description	Dialog
17.1		Caption: "You're a deadbeat in Columbus and you're a deadbeat in Athens."

Page 18 Four frames cut in the shape of a left-side passenger window on Spektor's car.

Panel	Description	Dialog
18.1	View of Spektor turning onto a street, with a "Euclid Ave" sign visible through the driver's window.	
18.2	View of Spektor looking out of the driver's side window at a house numbered 336	
18.3	Spektor looks out of his window at another house, numbered 350	
18.4	Spektor leans on his steering wheel, propping his chin on his wrists	

Page 19 An equal grid of twelve squares, three wide and four deep, except the top-left and top-center panels are merged into one wide panel.

Panel	Description	Dialog
19.1	Spektor holds his cell phone to his ear, in same posture as leaning on the steering wheel	
19.2	Carl holds cell phone to the ear; face looks curious	CARL Carl here.
19.3	Spektor maintains same posture, rubs hand over his eyes	SPEKTOR Carl, it's Mikey. I've got a little favor to ask.
19.4	Close-up on Spektor's hand rubbing eyes	SPEKTOR I need to find some stable work
19.5	Hands are held together in prayer form	SPEKTOR It's my girlfriend.
19.6	Wider view of Spektor, still crouched over the steering column; hand is held in the "stop" motion: flat and facing away from the body	SPEKTOR No, it's not like that. She's a lot smarter than me...
19.7	Spektor slumps back into the seat, slouching.	
19.8	Still slouching, with phone wedged between shoulder and ear, Spektor turns his palms up and raises his hands slightly	SPEKTOR Aaanything, Carl.
19.9	Spektor sits erect, bright eyed, holding phone in hand once more.	SPEKTOR What?
19.10	With his free hand, Spektor gestures plaintively	SPEKTOR Yeah, I'm fine for factory work. What are the specifics?

Page 19 An equal grid of twelve squares, three wide and four deep, except the top-left and top-center panels are merged into one wide panel.

Panel	Description	Dialog
19.11	Spektor leans head onto phone hand	SPEKTOR Thank you so much, Carl. You have no idea what a difference this will make.

Page 20 A full page view of Spektor's car in the residential street; houses are lined along the center-right, Spektor's car occupies center-left; road consumes bottom quarter; Lincoln and Morill towers crop up above houses in top-left. Frame

Panel	one is described in towers with a rectangle	Do not white; frame
20.1	two isolates the trunk of Spektor's car with an X-ray effect (explained in Panel 2) OSU's West Campus towers on a clear day	SPEKTOR Well, I've got to go see someone.
20.2	The frame cuts away the back of Spektor's car, reveals the package in the trunk.	SPEKTOR Take care of yourself.

Page 21 Full page view of a street-level view of an apartment building of brick and regular white windows, all with closed blinds. A short set of stairs leads to the door on the left, above a can-strewn, sloping, overgrown "lawn" of bluegrass

Panel	Description	Dialog
21.1	Blocking a full view of the curb is Spektor's car, parked in the foreground, the rear of the car intrudes on the frame around the door, closed windows occupy bottom-center and bottom-left, tall mailbox with the passenger window in bottom-right. Spektor and Ligia stand behind the car in bottom-center. Spektor is looking down and to the left, past Ligia. Ligia is wearing a trendy jacked over a simple top. Ligia is looking at Spektor's face. [White frames highlight the parts of the scene which serve as panels, whose location is identified in the panel description.] Frame over steps	SPEKTOR Hey Ligia! Do you have time for a coffee or something? LIGIA Mike! It's been so long! Since... what?
21.2		SPEKTOR Graduation. Is there a place you want to... ?
21.3	Another, similar X-ray frame over the package	LIGIA Place doesn't matter. You know I've been thinking about you lately?

Page 22 Full-page illustration, rotated, with "up" towards the fold and "down" away from the fold. The scene is in the front seats of Spektor's car. Spektor is driving with both hands gripping the wheel--he is looking forward and to the right

Panel	with a description visible as he speaks. Dialogue is looking	
22.1	Frame around Ligia smiling as if on the verge of laughter while touching the hair behind her ear with her right hand. A simple palm is visible on her right hand. White frames inward as before the divide the page outward	LIGIA Yeah, well Jack and I haven't always stuck together. I mean, I'm happy for him, but he does his own thing and leaves me to do my own.
22.2	Frame around rear-view mirror	SPEKTOR Those were his exact words, actually. I was wondering, how are you guys... He's leaving for Tanzania, and you're--
22.3	Frame around Spektor's lips	LIGIA Yeah, well Jack and I haven't always stuck together. I mean, I'm happy for him, but he does his own thing and leaves me to do my own.

Page 23 Another rotated full-page, also designed with "up" close to the fold and "down" towards the edge. Spektor and Ligia, in the midground, walk to the right background across a mostly empty parking lot towards a cookie cutter coffee

Panel	shop, Descompocaffeine". They are at the Diner/dry between the left and center sides of the page, with the coffee shop stretching over the center and right thirds. It's clear from this angle that Ligia is wearing a printed skirt. She is at least a foot shorter than Spektor. Spektor's car is in the foreground, seen at an angle from the driver's side of the windshield. In the center-left background are the dimly defined shapes of Polaris Mall's hotels and office buildings.	
23.1	Frame around ever-high-rise hotels	LIGIA use 2, are those just hotels? How many people visit Columbus?
23.2	Frame around Ligia (left) and Spektor (right)	LIGIA There's this roast I have to show you that you just HAVE to try. It's a Guatemalan with these traces of nuts and bark.
23.3	Frame around window sign, "Take home the luxury!"	SPEKTOR I'm just not used to all this, um, cosmopolitan stuff. It's all the buying and selling.

Page 24 Traditional page in the Dayton style! One wide panel of quarter-height along the top, above by two quarter-height panels of equal width, above an open, unframed illustration for the lower half of the page--in the corner of this

Panel	unframed description is a small, rectangular illustration	unframed illustration
24.1	In the foreground, a phone rings. In the midground, Max approaches it with an agitated look on his face	SPEKTOR I worked in shipping, and you can watch where all the freight's going. The whole economy's just like a garage sale. You empty it out and sell it for pennies.
24.2	Close-up on the caller ID on the phone, which reads "Carl".	SPEKTOR Ohio's only useful as a halfway place. The only thing we do here is move things from the people who work to the people with money.
24.3	Close-up on Max, who looks down with a mixture of shock and contempt	SPEKTOR The only thing for Dayton to do--anybody in Ohio--is to follow. And survive.
24.4	A small portion of a map of a highway route from Dayton to Cleveland and a scribble next to it	Caption: " <u>Carl</u> : Cleveland 877 E 200th 11pm tonight"
24.5	Max unlocks the driver's side of a rust-spotted Buick, dappled with dead leaves, with filthy windows and a miscolored passenger's side fender	SPEKTOR Gretchen says that when she had a disorder, it was because of the feeling of control. Maybe on the coast we could have control, but not here, not doing what you want. Just give up that control. You know?

Page 25 Regularly aligned (portrait) full-page illustration. Ligia leans her elbows onto a table inside Colombo Caffeine. Ligia occupies the top-right through center mid-ground. She is smiling as she speaks, and her coffee on the table is

Panel	Description
25.1	<p>untouched in the foreground is a silver napkin dispenser, reflecting Spektor's face. Spektor's expression is one of alarmed constraint. The background is the typical atmosphere of a chain coffee house. There are no frames on this page.</p> <p>LIGIA</p> <p>There are no frames on this page. The colonial stuff that my parents talk about. Columbus is named after Colombo and there's a big statue of him downtown, but I've heard my parents complain a million times that "he should've just stayed home". Like look at the mound builders--they had this big elaborate public works system--but then Thomas Worthington just rolled over all the Adena culture and built a mansion on top of their mound. You know he was the governor who moved the capital from Chillicothe to Columbus? It ruined his political career! I think that all the Ohio State Senate just hated moving. That's just a very Ohio thing to do: to hate moving. Aaron Burr came out here as like an explorer, but it was only after his life was ruined. He wasn't such a bad guy, he killed Hamilton in a fair dual, and Hamilton cheated on his wife. He tried to get women the vote and worshipped Wollenstonecraft. They said that he was a real ladies' man. You were a real ladies' man in high school, weren't you, Mike?</p>

Page 26 A full side view of Spektor and Ligia's table, oriented horizontally. Spektor and Ligia are in the midground, occupying the bottom-left through the center. The rest of the page is the coffee house. Spektor is on the left

Panel	of the table; he is looking directly at Ligia; He is leaning in slightly, but otherwise keeps excellent posture. Ligia is on the left, averting her gaze towards the POV, with her right hand propping up her face, head slumped back; when did Steedman leave for Africa? her left hand is clenched against her chest; her knees are clenched together. Above the empty table behind the pair is a faux-rustic print that reads in large, expressive capitals "From Old World to New World and Back Again". The frame around Ligia's embarrassed grimace, turned to the side	
26.1	Frame around Spektor's stern gaze	SPEKTOR
26.2	Frame around Ligia's	LIGIA I'm sorry, Mike. Jack says that we shouldn't try to keep a relationship while he's in Tanzania. He's said that monogamy is unnatural, anyway.
26.3	Frame around Ligia's knees, skirt, and calves pushed together underneath the table	LIGIA You know he was jealous of you in high school.
26.4	Frame around the print above the next table	SPEKTOR Now I'm jealous of him. Career-wise, I mean. But Ligia, I'm really happy with Gretchen. I feel, I don't know. Is it like I've actually made a difference in someone's life?

Page 27 Nearly identical illustration to Page 22: the main difference is the positioning of the characters. Ligia is standing in profile next to her door, facing left: in her moment in time she is speaking to Spektor. She shoegazes

Panel	bashful. She can't hold her hands together at her waist. Spektor is descending the steps, looking somewhat pensive.	
27.1	Frames Ligia	<p>LIGIA</p> <p>John Paul II said that love is the opposite of escape. The cheater is the dogmatist, an emotional shut-in.</p> <p>And I don't think love begins until it's faithful, and until it's challenged. So while it's hard, I'm going to hope for the best with Jack. Temptation is the beginning of love.</p>
27.2	Frames Spektor, leaving	<p>LIGIA</p> <p>I think you have something really valuable with Gretchen, Mike. You should keep her.</p>

Panel	Description	Dialog
28.1	Spektor behind wheel in profile from his right, viewed mid-abdomen to head; pensive	
28.2	Spektor, same POV until noted otherwise, looks down at cell phone held at chest-height	Caption: Hi Gretchen...
28.3	Spektor talks on phone held with right hand, leans onto steering column with left elbow; looks to down and to the right	SPEKTOR I've had some thoughts lately--important--and I think you should know.
28.4	Spektor, same position, looks directly down	SPEKTOR You know, when we met, we were both damaged goods. And since then we've-- grown up--together--emotionally.
28.5	Spektor sits up, holds out left hand pleadingly	SPEKTOR I'm really proud of you. You've become this beautiful person who loves herself, values herself, and you've helped me so much too.
28.6	Spektor crosses right arm over to put phone to left ear, tilts his head to the left and holds steering wheel with left hand	SPEKTOR But we've changed--for the better--and we can't be that couple of runts anymore.
28.7	Spektor holds phone with left hand to left ear, clutches right hand to chest, and slouches forward	SPEKTOR I think we need to work out where our relationship will go next, as friends.
28.8	Spektor rests forehead on steering column, right arm in lap	SPEKTOR As friends, we should still support each other without the-- in a better way than our romantic relationship.

Page 28 Identical to Page 19 in panel structure; twelve panels arranged three wide and four high

Panel	Description	Dialog
28.9	Same position as Panel 8 until noted otherwise	
28.10	Continued position of Panel 8	SPEKTOR I agree, but we should do this by phone if possible. I'm going to be gone for a little longer.
28.11	Spektor leans back onto seat, rubs forehead with right hand	SPEKTOR Carl got me this gig in Cleveland. I'm going to start tonight and then deliver this package.
28.12	Spektor leans back on seat limply	SPEKTOR Cleveland's the only place left. Anyway, I'll see you when I get back.

Page 29 Rear of Spektor's car on a highway in bottom third of page.
The road rises up to occupy the rest of the page--as if
inside a torus--with a road map of Cleveland in the top
third of the page.

Panel	Description	Dialog
29.1	Splash page	

Panel	Description	Dialog
30.1	While driving his car, Spektor--seen as though through the windshield--leans to adjust the radio and glances down at the console out of the corner of his eye	RADIO VOICE 1 SHHP--est day of the year. Now to get back to a testimony on today's theme, "Everyday Miracles". This is Joao, from Coshocton, with his story. FSSH
30.2	Spektor turns his full attention to the radio, taking his eyes off the road and only leaving one hand loosely holding the wheel	SPEKTOR ...radiovangelizin'... RADIO VOICE 2 [In small text] <i>When I lived in Brasil, tere were miracohs everywherr. When my souw was saved, by a missionare, he didn't speak a word of Portuguese. But halfway trough my vows, te translator stopped because tis man was speaking perfect Brazilian Portuguese. It was te Holy Spirr. Tere's no oter explanation.</i>
30.3	A view of the rear-view window, showing: in the left, Spektor's eye; in the center, the front of Max's car	RADIO VOICE 2 [In small text] <i>Te land serves te Lord. Christ said tat te stones would cry out, and in tese places wherr witness is needed he brings miracohs to testify.</i> SPEKTOR Is that Max's car?
30.4	View of Max driving, through the windshield and over the dash; Max is squinting and holding the wheel tightly with his hands together at the top	MAX Shit. He's slowing down... spotted me. Let's see the sights of North Canton.

Panel	Description	Dialog
31.1	View of Spektor through the windshield, sitting up but looking at the rear view mirror	<p>SPEKTOR Well that was weird.</p> <p>RADIO VOICE 1 ...One of my favorite miracles, the parable of the Lost Son. "The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country..."</p>
31.2	View of Cleveland downtown at night, as seen from the Cleveland Memorial Shoreway as it crosses Sycamore Street, with Spektor's car along the highway in the dark	<p>SPEKTOR Let's see if Cleveland can do any weirder.</p>

Page 32 Half-page illustration, followed by two squarish frames
arranged horizontally below

Panel	Description	Dialog
32.1	Spektor's car is in the parking lot for a Home Depot-like store with a sign for "Bell Hammer PLUS", which looks closed	
32.2	Spektor crosses the empty parking lot towards the store	
32.3	Two men with facial hair and wearing hats lean against the wall of the store	SPEKTOR Excuse me? Are you guys here for the night shift?

Panel	Description	Dialog
33.1	The right of the mustachioed men looks boredly at the left, who closes his eyes in exasperation	VAMOS Qué dijo? ÁNDALE Nada.
33.2	Spektor's body faces the men, who are in the background, but he looks away into the parking lot with a squint and a wrinkled nose	
33.3	Profile of old messenger van from the passenger's side in mid-ground, Spektor's back in foreground left; a man leans out from the passenger's window gesturing towards the back with his right arm	PASSENGER Git in the back. Vamos, ándale. D'any of yinz speak English?
33.4	Spektor stands with his hand raised	
33.5	Close-up on the Passenger, who is frustrated and gesturing back vigorously	PASSENGER Git in!
33.6	Passenger leans sideways inside the car to look at Spektor, who is seated on the floor behind the driver's seat	PASSENGER We've gawt te cross tan, probably thrih dantan, so I c'n explen some of the dee-tellss before we git there.

Panel	Description	Dialog
34.1	Spektor looks up from his crouched position towards the Passenger, puzzled	PASSENGER Or you fram here?
34.2	Spektor speaks with the same puzzled expression	SPEKTOR Uh... I'm from Dayton. Worked in shipping down there.
34.3	Passenger smiles in profile, still viewed in leaning position	PASSENGER I'm from Pittsburgh, bit I've bin working in Youngstan. Sem sorta work as hir: jist movin' fret an' askin' no quistions. Have yinz gaz bin told what sort of jawb this is?
34.4	Similar perspective as panel 3, but Passenger takes a more stern expression	PASSENGER Will, yinz sort, sill, and sit up the fret for dilivery. Dewn lik in the bawxess, dewn esk te many quistions, an' keep quat.
34.5	Above-the rooftop view of a dilapidated neighborhood of boarded-up brick homes and closed cement warehouses, lit sharply by streetlights; the van is halfway into a garage	PASSENGER Y'know a gah abawt your age from Day'n used te come boy from us dirictly? Bit he had black hair an' this thin, sorta' teenager mustache. Real educated. Had a weird way of talkin', too.

Page 35 Same layout as Page 33: two squares followed by one wide, repeat

Panel	Description	Dialog
35.1	Max's car, viewed from the front, parked in an alley	
35.2	Spektor climbs out of the back of the van, towards the left, with his head stooped	MANAGER All right, vamos, ándale, c'mon.
35.3	Spektor's back is in the foreground, left; the midground is a large pile of packages identical to "THE" package that he's carted around since DRES	MANAGER Okay, you I remember and you. You, kid, I haven't seen you before. (Spektor's phone rings)
35.4	Spektor, viewed from the front-right from head to thigh, looks down at his pocket	SPEKTOR It's just-- MANAGER Christ, you idiot! No phones, no phones!
35.5	Spektor, now viewed from shins to above his head, is holding up his hands in the air	MANAGER Don't leave, just turn it off!
35.6	Spektor bursts out of a double-door on a brick wall, with voices coming from behind him	MANAGER Somebody get him! Vamos ándale!

Panel	Description	Dialog
36.1	Spektor, head and shoulders in foreground, runs down a street, with the door and building deep in the background	SPEKTOR Huh! Huh! Huh!
36.2	Spektor looks over his right shoulder; Max's car is tracking him in the midground	

Panel	Description	Dialog
37.1	Above-left view of Max, leaning out of the window and looking up to Spektor--Max and his car are illustrated in the Dayton style	MAX Viddy well. Have you been taken for a ride?
37.2	View of the passenger's side of the car, from backseat door to mid-hood, with Spektor hunched but glancing away, over the hood, and trying to open the shotgun door	SPEKTOR Max, why are you here? How did you know where I was? MAX I'm here because I couldn't not be here, or that I can only be here. Unity of cause and effect and time and space and plot and all that.
37.3	Spektor's shoulders and cheek in foreground, turned to face Max, driving, in the mid-ground	MAX The brilliance of this country is a perfect monism of justice: individual action is the ideal adjunct of individual account. The magistery of this metalepsis amounts to a wholly unified system of cause and effect, a first law--heh--of social dynamics. "Fay çe que vouldras", yes?
37.4	Close-up on Max, from shoulders to crown, looking forward at the road as he speaks	MAX You, Mike, are the victim of yourself and no other. I am the champion of myself, and no other. And we have each engineered our ethics for ourselves, for our own exemplary epicurean eudemonics. And while your egress is as distant from my own as east from west, remark: by this maxim I've amassed my munus. Freedom, Mike, is its own prize and price.

Panel	Description	Dialog
38.1	View from outside of the car, through the shotgun window to Spektor, midground, who's looking out the window confusedly, and Max, background, who's smiling and leaning towards Spektor	MAX Et voici. SPEKTOR Did you bring me back to-- MAX --Bell Hammer Plus. Your Rocinante awaits. Your lecture reminded me of my unfinished windmills in Columbus. I'll see you in Dayton in eighty winks.
38.2	High overhead view of Spektor, in the parking lot, standing motionlessly, rubbing the back of his neck with his right hand	

Page 39 Four panels of unique trapezoids with non-perpendicular vertical edges: the top edge of the first two (parallel to the page's edge) is divided at roughly one-third of the distance from the left; the bottom edge of this pair

Panel	(also parallel to the page's edge) is divided one-third of the page's length away from the right edge; the gutter in between is diagonal and reaches from upper left to lower right. The bottom pair is the vertical mirror of the top pair, with its gutter in reaches from upper right to lower left.	
39.1	Spektor's hands in the foreground, his left hand on the package in the midground	SPEKTOR Looks like you're my job now. Let's get you home.
39.2	View from low in the passenger's seat as Spektor sets the package into the seat, with his left hand on the steering wheel	SPEKTOR You get to drive shotgun, buddy.
39.3	From the same perspective, with the package in the foreground, Spektor checks his phone, held at belly height	SPEKTOR I have no idea who called in that warehouse.
39.4	Same perspective: Spektor drives, eyes on the road, but listening to the cell phone in his right hand	GRETCHEN Caption: Mike, I'm still really hurt, but I hope you get this. You really, REALLY shouldn't listen to anything that Oswald or even Max tell you.

Page 40 Three wide wedges: one on top & one on the bottom with a long left side and a short right side; one in the middle with a short left side and a long right side

Panel	Description	Dialog
40.1	A perspective-heavy view of Spektor's right side of his face in the left part of the frame, with his arm and the steering wheel in the center and right parts	GRETCHEN Caption: Max and I got to know each other in this advanced program together at UD. He had an internship at the hospital, and I was still very badly ana. He sold me pills, Mike.
40.2	Flashback to Oswald, kicking in someone's knee from page 15	GRETCHEN Caption: Around the time that you guys graduated high school, Oswald joined him as a sort of business partner. And the business started getting big, and violent, and scary.
40.3	Flashback to Gretchen & Spektor walking together, Gretchen frustrated, from Page 6	GRETCHEN Caption: I got scared, at least, and I started dosing higher and going for more extreme weights. That was when my family finally caught on and took me to rehab. Something happened to Max when he got rejected. He wasn't always like this, and the money made him worse.

Page 41 One half-page illustration, divided from by a diagonal gutter running from upper right to lower left, followed by two more uneven panels with a lower right to upper left gutter

Panel	Description	Dialog
41.1	Overhead view of Max (left) and Oswald (right) sitting together at a table. Max has is writing in an open ledger. Oswald is counting bills. Pill bottles are scattered around the table.	GRETCHEN Caption: But Oswald--Oswald was always this bad. And if you've trusted him for a second, you're in trouble. Anyway, I'm rambling at this point. Good luck with this new job and call me back whenever you get this.
41.2	View of Spektor's car on the road in front of an empty lot in the middle of Industrial Valley	SPEKTOR There's nothing here. This is the last place left.
41.3	Flashback to Oswald from Page 6, panel 7: Oswald kicks in a guy's knee	
41.4	Oswald touches mouth with left hand, looks down and to the left	OSWALD You only need to check in Cleveland, Columbus, and Chillicothe.

Page 42 Four wide panels, roughly quarter-height, with mild diagonal gutters

Panel	Description	Dialog
42.1	Spektor's hip, thighs and hands carrying the package; in center frame	
42.2	Spektor, seen in full, jumping on the package; in the left side of the frame	
42.3	Close-up on the crushed package: pill bottles and packing peanuts pour out; in center frame	
42.4	Spektor, left, following through after throwing the package, center, into the river in the midground	

Page 43 Splash page: viewed head-on, Spektor sits behind the wheel, illustrated in the new style, glowering.

Panel	Description	Dialog
43.1		RADIO VOICE 1 ...today's lesson, from Second Peter, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."

Page 45 View of Ligia's apartment building from page 21. Spektor is carrying a stack of boxes down the stairs. Ligia is putting boxes into the trunk of a car on the far right of the page. There is a sign in the yard. White frames delineate panels

Panel	Description	Dialog
45.1	Spektor, glancing around the stack of boxes to find his way down the steps	<p>SPEKTOR Wait, so you aren't going to Rio?</p> <p>LIGIA No, Brasilia's closer to my family home.</p>
45.2	Close-up on the sign, which reads, "Room for Rent"	<p>LIGIA Are you sure you're going to be okay with the rent?</p> <p>SPEKTOR Oh, sure. I got a starter loan from the Bank of Max Ernst.</p>
45.3	Ligia, leans slightly to shove boxes into the back of the car	<p>SPEKTOR You know he finally got into that MD-PhD program? The break-in really motivated him to get off the couch.</p> <p>LIGIA And what about your education? Are you ever going to go to college?</p>

Page 46 Same street view, Spektor is standing in the left portion of the street with a mattress on his back. Ligia is behind the now-closed trunk of the car.

Panel	Description	Dialog
46.1	Frame around Spektor, who's nearly doubled over beneath the weight of the mattress	<p>SPEKTOR Well, the organizer at the shop has been loaning me some books by Fredric Jameson. It's really heavy stuff.</p> <p>LIGIA Heavy--do you want some help with that mattress?</p>
46.2	Frame around Ligia's head as she holds her hand to her mouth in apprehension	<p>SPEKTOR No no no no! Leave this to me.</p> <p>LIGIA Did you hurt your hand recently? That bandage is soaked through. You probably should set down the mattress.</p>

Page 47 A splash page of Spektor's hand and thighs, holding up the mattress, viewed from the back-right. The back of his hand is wrapped in gauze which is mostly blackened along the knuckles and dark over the rest of the back. The corner of the mattress that he holds has a slightly damaged zipper, such

Panel	the mattress that he holds has a slightly damaged zipper, such that a single hundred-dollar bill is sticking out.
47.1	<p>SPEKTOR No, I've got it. This was just from some glass when I forgot to wrap my hand.</p> <p>LIGIA Oh, from the break-in, right?</p> <p>SPEKTOR Um.</p> <p>LIGIA You were picking up glass after someone smashed your window and stole Max's stuff, right?</p> <p>SPEKTOR Yes.</p> <p>LIGIA Why don't you just go to the OSU Hospital? It's right around the corner.</p> <p>SPEKTOR Well, I'm afraid I'll run into Max.</p> <p>LIGIA Why wouldn't you want to see Max?</p> <p>SPEKTOR ... You know I never understood a damn thing that guy said.</p>

Page 48 Splash page: low-angle image of Max, outside with a passenger jet flying overhead, looking sternly into the distance and wearing a white lab coat with an OSU Med Center nametag.

Panel	Description	Dialog
48.1		<p>LIGIA But he had to get robbed to get off the couch?</p> <p>SPEKTOR You can't buy a second chance like that.</p>